



THE Hans India



Dehydration, headaches and low energy: Why women are more vulnerable in summer
Summer heat can be harsh on the body, especially for women. Dehydration happens when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. During hot weather, we sweat more to cool down.

Life must be protected, not 'pactually' abandoned
Whether it is the Constitutional law or criminal law, suicide cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Life is for living. No one has the right to die, but rather a duty to live and let others live.

40 Maoists still active in State: CM
With the deadline for the complete eradication of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) approaching, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said on Monday that as many as 40 Maoists are currently active in various parts of the State.

Council deadlock ends, debate set for Feb 26
Proceedings of the Legislative Council were disrupted for the fifth consecutive day on Monday amid continuing protests by Opposition YSRCP members over the alleged adulteration controversy involving Heritage Foods.

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WINDOWS
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CROSS-BORDER TERROR INDIA ROLLS OUT ANTI-TERROR DOCTRINE PRAHAAR

NEW DELHI: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs on Monday released India's first comprehensive anti-terror policy, naming it "PRAHAAR", and flagged threats ranging from cross-border terrorism and cyber-attacks to the misuse of drones and emerging technologies. The policy emphasizes that apart from terror sponsored from across the border, "criminal hackers and nation states continue to target India through cyber-attacks." It notes that India faces terrorist threats across water, land and air, and states that capacities have been developed to secure critical sectors of the economy, including power, railways, aviation, ports, defence, space and atomic energy, against state and non-state actors. The strategy document, uploaded on the MHA's website, states that "India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation." It adds that the country has long been affected by "sponsored terrorism" from across the border, with "Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations" continuing to plan and execute attacks. The policy names global terror groups such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), stating that they have sought to incite violence in India through sleeper cells, while violent extremists operating from foreign countries have hatched conspiracies to promote terrorism. It further highlights the use of advanced technologies by handlers across the border, including drones, particularly in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

'SWARNANDHRA-2047' VISION CM AIMS AT ₹54 LAKH PER CAPITA INCOME

Naidu says welfare budget aims at social equity, poverty elimination Promises 33 per cent BC reservations before local body polls

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday said the State government is working towards increasing Andhra Pradesh's per capita income from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 54 lakh as part of the 'Swarnandhra-2047' Vision, aligning it with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047. Speaking during a discussion on welfare budget allocations in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said the NDA coalition government is committed to achieving social equality and reducing

The AP government is implementing the P4 model to bridge economic inequalities, under which 10 lakh "Bangaru kutumbalu" have been adopted by one lakh mentors to support the poorest of the poor



economic disparities. So, focus is being laid on uplifting the poorest sections and ensuring that politically backward classes receive priority. Chandrababu reiterated that the 'Super Six' welfare schemes have proved to be a "super hit", benefiting sections such as auto workers, fishermen and handloom weavers. The government is implementing the P4 model to bridge economic inequalities, under which 10 lakh "Bangaru kutumbalu" have been adopted by one lakh mentors to support the poorest of the poor. "Any programme will yield results only if it is constantly monitored. There should be no poverty if we are to achieve the 2047 goal," he said, emphasising targeted interventions for vulnerable communities. Despite financial constraints, he said, higher allocations have been made for SCs, STs, BCs and for minority welfare in the current budget. He assured members that the state government would sincerely implement the allocations and ensure effective delivery of essential commodities with technical monitoring support.

'Leave Iran by all available means'

India's fresh advisory amid 'fear of war' in Middle East NEW DELHI

Indians in Iran have been advised to leave amid possible US strikes in the days to come. In its latest advisory, the Embassy of India asked its citizens to "leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights." The advisory applies to everyone in Iran - students, pilgrims, businesspersons and tourists. "The January 14, 2026, advisory is hereby reiterated that all Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations, stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Iran and monitor local media for any developments," the advisory read.

'Heartbroken with status of West Bengal under Mamata rule'

Modi says change of guard inevitable in state KOLKATA

IN a public appeal to West Bengal voters, weeks before the declaration of Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said he was "heartbroken by the deceit and anguish" faced by the cross-section of the state's citizens under the current Mamata Banerjee regime and vowed to correct it by building a "Viksit Paschim Banga". Modi said while a political change was "inevitable", a "judicious choice" by voters could align the state with the accelerated development seen in the rest of the country. In an open letter written in Bengali, which began with the slogan 'Jai Maa Kali', Modi targeted the TMC government on issues ranging from lack of governance and appeasement politics to fake voters, employment



deficiency and women's safety. The PM also promised citizenship to refugees through the CAA and pledged to stop infiltration through state borders as part of his pre-election promises. "Bengal used to be the nation's vanguard in both financial and industrial sectors in post-Independence India. It pains me to witness the brittle and sick state it has turned into. It is impossible to describe the irreversible damage which six decades of misgovernance and appeasement politics have caused," Modi said.

'Milk contamination' leaves four dead, 12 in hospital with anuria

Condition of four patients under treatment 'critical' Prelim probe points to contamination of milk sold by an unauthorised vendor

HANS NEWS SERVICE RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

AT least four persons have lost their lives over 48 hours starting Sunday and 12 others have been hospitalised with suspected anuria, after members of several families in Lalacheruvu and adjoining localities in Rajamahendravaram started falling ill from February 15, upon consuming milk suspected to have been adulterated and sold by an unauthorised vendor to over a hundred families.



CM N Chandrababu Naidu at a review meeting in Amaravati on Monday over the death of four people due to contaminated milk

CM announces ₹10L ex gratia AMARAVATI: CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday announced an ex gratia of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of those who died after allegedly consuming adulterated milk in Chowdeshwari Nagar and Swaroop Nagar areas of Rajamahendravaram. Addressing the Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister said the government would bear the entire medical expenses of those undergoing treatment and expressed deep sympathy to the bereaved families.

Chief Electoral SIR complete

Tamil Nadu Names of 97 lakh voters deleted in draft list

CHENNAI: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Tamil Nadu has been completed with the state now having a total of 5,67,07,380 voters, comprising 2,77,38,925 male and 2,89,60,838 female and 7,617 third gender voters. Chief Electoral Officer of Tamil Nadu, Archana Patnaik, released the final electoral roll. Post the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), the state saw 97.37 lakh voter deletions, with urban constituencies accounting for the bulk of deletions. IT and HRD Minister Nara Lokesh has said that all facts relating to the alleged use of adulterated ghee in the making of Tirumala laddu during the erstwhile regime would be presented in the Assembly on Tuesday. Speaking to journalists

'POLITICAL PRASADAM' ON ANVIL? Will place Tirumala ghee facts before Assembly today, asserts Lokesh

Slams Botsa over 'propaganda' against Heritage Foods company Questions YSRCP over Legislative Council disruptions and ghee pricing claims



in the Assembly lobby on Monday, Lokesh strongly criticised former minister Botsa Satyanarayana for his "propaganda" against Heritage Foods. He clarified that Indapur Dairy has no connection with Heritage and objected to Botsa's refrain that Indapur Dairy is a "Heritage Co-company".

MASSIVE BLOW TO TERROR Armed forces eliminate 7 dreaded ultras

SRIANGAR: The Indian Army on Monday said that it dealt a massive blow to the terror network in Jammu & Kashmir, a day after security forces gunned down three members of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), including most wanted terrorist Saifullah, in an encounter in Kishtwar district. In a post on X, the Army's White Knight Corps said that it conducted a relentless and painstaking high-altitude joint operations over 326 days in the Kishtwar region. "Forces tracked terrorists in challenging conditions of cold, wet and freezing weather across daunting terrain, leading to multiple contacts.

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We are protesting against their shameless protest

MISLEADING UPSC 2023 RESULT ADS CCPA slaps ₹15L penalty on Vajirao & Reddy

NEW DELHI

THE Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 15 lakh on Vajirao & Reddy Institute for issuing misleading advertisements related to the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023. The authorities found that the institute deliberately concealed important information about the specific courses taken by successful candidates, creating a false



impression of the coaching services provided. The institute had advertised claims such as: "Over 645 Selections Out of 1016 Vacancies in UPSC CSE 2023 From Vajirao & Reddy Institute"

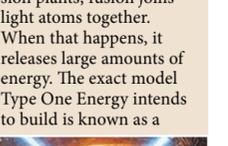
Maha seeks CBI probe into Ajit Pawar plane crash

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra government has requested Union Home Minister Amit Shah to order a CBI investigation into the plane crash that killed Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar last month, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis has said.

Bill Gates building 'artificial sun' that could replace coal

WASHINGTON Fusion is the process that powers the Sun. Instead of splitting atoms like today's nuclear fission plants, fusion joins light atoms together. When that happens, it releases large amounts of energy. The exact model Type One Energy intends to build is known as a

stellarator. A stellarator is a device that utilises very strong magnetic fields to keep plasma, which is heated to extreme temperatures, in a confined space. Plasma is a gas that has been heated to such a high temperature that it becomes a sort of fourth state of matter. In a fusion reactor, the plasma needs to be heated to a temperature of approximately 100 million degrees Celsius.



Gold and silver buying not alarming, says FM CLAIMS HIGH-PITCHED DEMAND APPEARS TO BE SEASONAL

NEW DELHI

THE Union government is closely monitoring gold and silver prices, and the situation is not alarming, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said, adding that the high-pitched demand in the domestic market appears to be "seasonal". Addressing the media after its customary post-budget meeting with the Central Board of Directors of the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Sitharaman said, "Almost all the gold that comes to the market is imported. We are an import-dependent country; steps have been taken, but they are not sufficient to meet demand." "Gold is a favoured investment for households. The high-pitched demand in the domestic market appears to be seasonal. We are watching it; it has not reached an alarming situation," she said.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman at a post-budget meeting with RBI's Central Board of Directors

The RBI, she said, is also monitoring the situation. "Most countries today, particularly central banks, are buying gold and silver. International prices of gold and silver are spiking up and down largely due to central bank buying," Sitharaman said. On the US tariff issue, the minister said the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is reviewing the situation. "It is early to comment." The Finance Minister was

also asked about the ongoing strategic disinvestment of IDBI Bank. She said there is "no systemic kind of issue" and added that the government does not comment on individual companies. She further said the RBI has adequate liquidity. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra echoed the Finance Minister. "We stand committed to providing liquidity for the productive needs of our economy."

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Legislature sports meet to begin at IGMC stadium today

- 156 MLAs and MLCs to participate in three-day event
- Chief Minister, Deputy CM to attend inaugural ceremony

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Legislature Sports will be held at the Indra Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada from February 24 to 26, bringing together legislators from across the State for a three-day sporting event aimed at promoting camaraderie among people's representatives.

According to officials, a total of 156 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs), including women represent-



Saap chairman Animini Ravi Naidu, along with MLAs, addressing the media regarding arrangements for the AP Legislature sports meet at the Indra Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium in Vijayawada on Monday

atives, will participate in the annual event. Officials said elaborate arrangements have been made to ensure the smooth conduct of the Legislature Sports Meet.

In preparation for the meet, Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (Saap)

chairman Animini Ravi Naidu, along with several legislators, unveiled the event jerseys and inspected arrangements at the stadium.

Addressing the media, Ravi Naidu said the sports meet would be inaugurated by Assembly Speaker Chin-

takayala Ayyannapatrudu at 3 pm on Tuesday. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, and several ministers are expected to attend the inaugural ceremony, he said.

Further, he said as many as

14 events would be conducted, including cricket, kabaddi, volleyball, tug of war, athletics, badminton, chess, and carroms. Six teams would compete in the cricket tournament, captained by MLA Palla Srinivas and ministers Nadendla Manohar, Y Satya Kumar Yadav, Kolu Parthasarathy, K Atchannaidu, and Kollu Ravindra, he added.

Also, he said kabaddi competitions would feature teams led by Vasamsetti Subhas, Bhumireddy Ramgopal Reddy, BC Janardhan Reddy, and Raghurama Krishna Raju. Women ministers, MLAs, and MLCs would also participate in various events, showcasing their sporting talent, he said.

MLAs B Sudheer Reddy, S Vijay Kumar, MLC B Kalyana Chakravarthy, and others were present during the inspection.

PDF MLC Gopi Murthy returns Rs 1 L coupon, slams disruption of session

Says the Council should focus on public issues, not the political agenda

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

PROGRESSIVE Democratic Front (PDF) MLC Borra Gopi Murthy on Monday returned a coupon worth Rs 1 lakh that was distributed to MLAs and MLCs during the ongoing Budget session. He stated that he did not wish to accept the benefit while the House was not functioning in the interests of the people.

The coupon was handed back to Legislative Council Joint Secretary Vijaya Raju. The Budget session of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council has been in progress since February 9, with the Budget presented on February 14.

PDF MLC Gopi Murthy alleged that meaningful debate on the Budget was being hindered and that political issues such as the laddu and ghee adulteration controversy were dominating proceedings. He said the Council, often described as a House of elders, should correct and refine legislative discussions rather than allow disruption.

The MLC expressed concern that key issues affecting salaried employees, PRC implementation, small employees, farmers, tenant farm-



PDF MLC Borra Gopi Murthy returning a coupon worth Rs 1 lakh to Vijaya Raju, joint secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, at the council hall in Amaravati on Monday

ers, labourers, ASHA workers, and Anganwadi staff were not receiving adequate attention during the session.

CM links accountability to recognition in governance push

- Monthly appreciation letters to high-performing staff will be issued and recorded in service registers, while underperformers face corrective guidance
- Cleanliness in hospitals, availability of doctors, and strict monitoring of sanitation agencies ordered; temples must balance improved facilities with spiritual atmosphere

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed government employees and officials to work with renewed commitment to deliver improved public services, asserting that

performance must be linked with accountability and recognition.

Reviewing various departments at the RTGS centre on Monday, the Chief Minister said while underperforming staff should be guided and motivated, those excelling at the field level and earning public appreciation must be formally recognised.

Accepting suggestions from senior officials, he ordered issuance of monthly appreciation letters to high-performing employees and directed that such commendations be recorded in their service registers. He also stressed measurable performance indicators and corrective steps for those lagging behind. During the review of the health department, Naidu underscored that cleanliness in hospitals, starting from Primary Health Centres, must be treated as a top priority. Outsourcing agencies responsible for sanitation would be held accountable for lapses, he warned, directing officials to identify hospitals failing to improve

standards. He also instructed authorities to ensure there is no shortage of doctors and to closely monitor equipment availability and hygiene.

Turning to the endowments department, the Chief Minister called for improved facilities for devotees while preserving the spiritual atmosphere in temples.

On revenue reforms, he emphasised restoring public trust through zero tolerance towards corruption. Land disputes should be resolved through survey, and services, especially land transactions, must be automated. He warned of strict action against erring surveyors.

The Chief Minister also called for safe drinking water monitoring, road accident audits, and expanded awareness of technology-based governance services. Referring to his participation in the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, he directed departments to prepare action plans to implement MoUs signed during the event.

Patna court slams AP cops over IPS officer Naik's arrest

Judge cites procedural lapses, absence of warrant and failure to inform Bihar police before halting Andhra team's bid to take Sunil Naik into custody while rejecting transit remand

PATNA

IN a setback to the Andhra Pradesh police, a court in Patna has strongly objected to the manner in which senior IPS officer Sunil Naik was arrested at his residence in Bihar and rejected the transit remand sought in connection with a case linked to former MP J Raghurama Krishna Raju.

According to available information, an Andhra Pradesh police team led by SP A.R. Damodhar, DSP Arvind K and DySP G.B. Ramanna Murthy, along with a woman constable and six other personnel, reached Naik's residence at Rajban-



Sunil Naik

shinagar around 6 am on Monday. The team allegedly scaled the compound wall and entered the premises without prior intimation to the local Shastrinagar police station or any competent Bihar authority.

No arrest warrant was produced at the time. When Naik questioned whether mandatory inter-state arrest procedures had been followed, officers reportedly stated that a warrant was not required and that prior information to local police was unnecessary. The arrest memo was prepared at 6 am, while the local police were informed only at 6.20 am, after the arrest had been effected. The operation also allegedly caused distress to Naik's 66-year-old mother, who was reportedly confined to her room for a brief period during the search. It was further alleged that some officers were in plain clothes and did not clearly identify them-

selves, raising concerns over compliance with established arrest norms, including the D.K. Basu guidelines.

When produced before the jurisdictional court, the judge rejected the transit remand, citing procedural lapses, absence of a warrant, failure to inform local police in advance and submission of documents solely in Telugu without translation. The court directed that Naik not be arrested for 30 days.

Naik has been named in an FIR lodged in Guntur district in 2024 based on allegations of custodial torture made by Raju, who is now Deputy Speaker of Andhra Pradesh Assembly.

Women's archery ranking tourney concludes

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE 3rd NTRP Khelo India National Women's

Archery Ranking Tournament for Senior, Junior and Sub-Junior categories concluded successfully at the Siddhartha Institute

of Hotel Management and Catering Technology here after two days of intense competition.

The prestigious event was jointly organised by Andhra Pradesh Archery Association (APAA), Krishna District Archery Association (KDA), Cherukuri Volga Archery Academy, under the aegis of Archery Association of India, supported by the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) and the District Sports Authority of

NTR district.

More than 170 women archers from various States participated in the ranking tournament across compound and recurve events in all three categories. Technical officials appointed by the national federation supervised the competitions.

V Spoorthi Bhimavaram secured the gold medal in the Sub-Junior Compound category, while K Bhushikirthana won silver in the Junior Compound

division. V Priya Vaishnavi also clinched medals in her respective event. Winners in different categories were presented medals, certificates, and prizes during the closing ceremony.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Sports Committee former Chairman Donepudi Shankar, senior advocates N Sai Sankar and P Rajasekhar, and other dignitaries attended as



Winners of the National Women's Archery Ranking Tournament being felicitated with medals and certificates by dignitaries at the closing ceremony in Vijayawada on Monday

chief guests and distributed awards to the winners. APAA Chairman Cheruku-

ri Satyanarayana, General Secretary BV Ramana and others were present.

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Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number

1. Sallaja Jonnada (Applicant), Govrn Prasad Jonnada (Co-Applicant), Lan: S168208000001

Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date

31.12.2025 / Rs. 9,14,693/- (Rupees Nine Lakh Fourteen Thousand Six Hundred Ninety-Three Only) as on 30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025

Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)

A site of an extent of 82.83sq.yds, D. No. 8-32-890, S. No. 129/4, Vizianagaram Municipality, Vantitadi, ward No. 8, Block No. 32, Vizianagaram Mandal, Vizianagaram District, Andhra Pradesh. East: RCC slab house of valluri uma maheshwar rao, West: RCC slab house of Koppera Venkata ramana murty raj, North: RCC slab of pedda majji adinarayana, South: CC Road.

Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) Loan Account Number

1. Kandregula Devi Lavanya (Applicant), 2. Kandregula Sambha Sivarao (Co-Applicant), Lan: S168202000026

Demand Notice Date and Amount With NPA Date

31.12.2025 / Rs. 15,37,211/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Thirty Seven Thousand Two Hundred Eleven Only) as on 30.12.2025 (NPA) on 29.12.2025

Description Of Secured Assets (Immovable Property)

A site of an extent of 50.22 sqyds together with old tied house, bearing D. No. 15-19-9, Assessment No. 12913/19, 375/19 of P.V.R Naidu Street, Anakapalli Village, Anakapalli Mandalam, Visakhapatnam District. East: Item No. 2, West: Joint wall between this property and property Releasee, North: Item No. 3, South: Site of Appa Rao.

Place : Vizianagaram/ Sd/-

Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh Authorized Officer

Date : 24.02.2026 Invent Assets Securitization and Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd

NEGLECT OF TENANT FARMERS ALLEGED

- All India Kisan Morcha State Convener Shobanadreeswara Rao launches a 30-hour indefinite hunger strike
- Demand removal of the requirement for the landowner's signature for issuing tenant farmer identity cards
- Warns that small and marginal farmers may gradually disappear, with agricultural lands ending up in the hands of large corporate entities



All India Kisan Morcha State Convener and former minister Vadde Shobanadreeswara Rao and others at launch of tenant farmers' 30-hour protest in Vijayawada on Monday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

ALLEGING that tenant farmers, who form a major backbone of agricultural cultivation in the State, are being neglected, All India Kisan Morcha State Convener and former minister Vadde Shobanadreeswara Rao strongly criticised the

government on Monday.

He launched a 30-hour indefinite hunger strike under the leadership of AP Tenant Farmers' Association NTR and Krishna district committees, demanding that all tenant farmers be provided Rs 20,000 under the "Annadata

Sukhibhava" scheme. He also demanded removal of the requirement for the landowner's signature for issuing tenant farmer identity cards and insisted that crop loans, compensation, and insurance benefits be extended directly to tenant farmers.

Addressing the gathering, Vadde clarified that landowners would not suffer any loss by signing lease agreements and that ownership rights would remain unaffected. Expressing concern over the plight of tenant farmers, he said they were "like candles that

give light to others while melting away themselves," adding that despite their hard work, they are left only with mounting debts.

Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Workers' Association General Secretary V Venkateswarlu extended support to the protest, stating that agriculture in the State survives largely because of tenant farmers. He criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, alleging that promises made before elections — including recognition of tenant farmers, enactment of a special law, and extension of Annadata Sukhibhava benefits to all tenant farmers — have not been fulfilled after assuming office. Leaders warned that small and marginal farmers may gradually disappear, with agricultural lands ending up in the hands of large corporate entities. They also condemned the alleged use of the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA)

against public movement activists while providing protection to exploiters.

AP Rythu Sangham senior leader Y Kesava Rao criticised the recent State Budget, noting that while Rs 52,000 crore was allocated to agriculture, there was no specific mention of tenant farmers. Tenants' Association State General Secretary Maganti Haribabu alleged that the present administration was continuing policies of the previous regime and questioned the allocation of land to corporates at nominal rates. The protest was presided over by Krishna district president TV Lakshmana Swamy. Leaders Panchakarla Rangarao, J Venkateswara Rao, and G Seetha Reddy were honoured with initiation garlands by Vadde to mark the beginning of the hunger strike. State Vice-President Gopal and other leaders also participated. Progressive songs rendered by farmers' leader Alibaba.

Coastal protection project to mitigate erosion woes

- The coastal erosion mitigation project includes scientific and inclusive approach
- The escalating threat of coastal erosion and flooding plaguing the metropolitan region since 2007
- After the committee's review, the final approval is awaited for the project

VASU POTNURU
VISAKHAPATNAM

IN a concrete step to mitigate escalating threat of coastal erosion and flooding that plagues the metropolitan region since 2007, Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) has come up with a comprehensive project.

Identifying 30 vulnerable sites along the coast, the coastal erosion mitigation project aims to provide a long-term solution to enhance climate resilience and coastal sustainability at an estimated cost of Rs.203-crore.

Covering the vital coastal stretch from Coastal Battery Junction to Bheemunipatnam, the 30 erosion-prone locations have been identified.



A file photo of a portion of the collapsed wall RK Beach due to beach erosion in Visakhapatnam

Among them, RK Beach area has been classified as high-risk, while Peda Jalaripeta, Mangamaripeta and Bheemunipatnam fall under moderate-risk zones. The rest of the stretches have been categorised as low-risk.

The classifications of zones intend to enable a prioritised and cost-effective intervention strategy.

Around 28.81-km of coastline in Visakhapatnam is prone to high erosion, while moderate or low erosion impacts 46.2-km long coastline.

The VMRDA officials

have presented the coastal erosion mitigation project before the subcommittee of the national executive committee.

Prepared in close collaboration with the National Centre for Coastal Research, the detailed project report (DPR) stands out for integrating cutting-edge scientific analysis, involving extensive stakeholder consultations.

Inputs from fishing communities and premier institutions such as the National Institute of Ocean Technology have ensured that the

project is technically robust, socially responsive and adheres to scientific and inclusive approach.

Highlighting the project, VMRDA Commissioner N Tej Bharath emphasised that the project directly addresses the escalating threats of coastal erosion and flooding that have impacted the region since 2007. "This initiative is designed to safeguard lives, livelihoods and invaluable public assets while ensuring long-term coastal stability," he mentioned.

The project is taken forward with a strong centre-

state synergy. The Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority will contribute 10 percent of the cost, while the remaining 90 percent is proposed to be funded through the National Disaster Mitigation Fund under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Beyond preventing land loss, the project promises significant economic and social dividends. It will protect major tourism landmarks, including the iconic submarine museum, TU-142 Aircraft Museum, various parks, premium hotels and the arterial beach road (marine drive) that connects Visakhapatnam to Bheemunipatnam and ensure the sustained productivity of local fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on a stable coastline.

Designed by VMRDA with the support of the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR), the project serves as a key milestone in providing a safe coastline for future generations. Upon the final approval of the project, implementation includes a well-coordinated framework, involving the State Disaster Management Authority, local panchayats and a dedicated technical advisory committee to ensure continuous monitoring and quality control of the project.

Collector goes tough on town planning officials



District Collector MN Harendhira Prasa

- Asks the officials to go on leave if they don't like to work
- Says any negligence in resolving public problems will not be tolerated
- 10 Officials have been failing to provide proper solutions to the complaints lodged in the PGRS platform for the past few weeks

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

DISTRICT Collector MN Harendhira Prasad issued a warning to GVMC Town Planning officials to either go on leave or resolve the complaints raised by the public without fail.

"If you don't like to work, go on leave. I will not tolerate if you are negligent in resolving

public problems," Harendhira Prasad warned GVMC town planning officials here on Monday.

10 Officials have been failing to provide proper solutions to the complaints lodged in the PGRS platform for the past few weeks.

The Collector asked why their performance has not changed despite being given memos twice.

He enquired with the officials about the reasons for the delay in resolving the problems of the people.

Harendhira Prasad made it clear that there should be not be any such repetition.

The requests and complaints received from the people should be given a comprehensive solution, he stressed.

Meanwhile, a number of complaints have been received against the GVMC Town Planning department.

Although illegal constructions are continuing all over the city and action taken against them are very minimal.

The GVMC is organising grievances on the problems in the Town Planning department on every Friday at the main office of the corporation.

Around 15 to 20 complaints have been received every week during the town planning open forum.

The authorities have not yet disclosed how many of these complaints have been resolved.

Despite complaints over corruption in the name of the BPS scheme, no action is taken and they

The Collector was disappointed over the lack of appropriate response from the officials to the complaints received regarding the town planning.

Arilova police crack murder and robbery case

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

CITY police have cracked a robbery and murder case of a woman registered under the Arilova police station limits.

The accused involved was arrested and a huge quantity of gold ornaments, cash and other items were recovered from his possession.

Briefing the case details here on Monday, DCP (Crime) Latha Madhuri mentioned that on February 11, Kapu Venkata Ramana, a resident of Durganagar, Arilova, found his wife Kapu Lakshmi (54) dead lying in a pool of blood at home.

He complained that some unknown persons had murdered her and looted gold ornaments she was wearing and fled with cash in the



DCP (Crime) K Latha Madhuri briefing the media about the case in Visakhapatnam on Monday

house.

Based on the complaint, the Arilova police have registered a case.

The accused was identified as Vanjarapu Siva Gangaraju alias Tata Siva (34), a resident of Koneru Gattu village, Bobbili mandal of Vizianagaram district.

Based on the directions of City Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, special teams, led by DCP (Crime) K Latha Madhuri, ACP Dwarka Sub-Division and Arilova Circle Inspector B Bhadra Rao, launched the investigation. Siva Gangaraju was

nabbed with the support of technology such as CCTV footage and call detail record analysis.

The police, who found that the accused had fled to places like Dhanbad, Kashi, Delhi after committing the crime, arrested him at Visakhapatnam railway station on the night of February 22.

Approximately Rs.5.5 lakh cash, a gold chain (about 16.10 grams), golden Lakshmi Devi idols, black-beaded chain, golden bangles and rings along with the cell phone and a motorcycle were recovered from the accused. The senior officers congratulated CI MVP police station Chakradhar Rao and the crime staff of Dwarka and Arilova police stations for cracking the complex case in a short span of time.

E VITARA VEHICLE LAUNCHED AT VARUN NEXA



Union Bank DGM J Simhachallam, Maruthi area manager D Sarkar, Nexa sales head Abbas Khan, AGM-Varun Motors A Naidu, sales manager of Varun B Venkata Rao during the launch of E Vitara vehicle at Varun Nexa in Visakhapatnam on Monday

Importance of safeguarding maritime interests highlighted

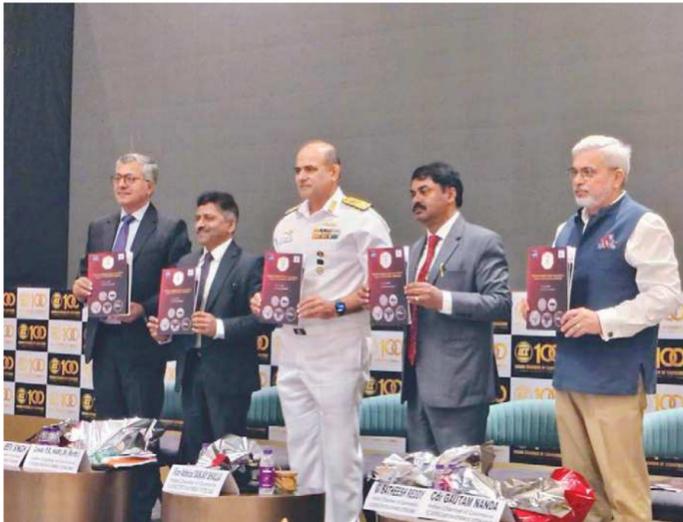
HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

FLAG Officer Commanding in Chief, Eastern Naval Command Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla highlighted the importance of safeguarding maritime interests, projecting power in the Indo-Pacific and ensuring economic security.

Speaking at the ICC Defence Start Up and Autonomous Systems Summit, Vice Admiral Sanjay Bhalla stated that modernisation through domestic defence manufacturing helps in achieving strategic autonomy.

In his address, G Sathesh Reddy, president of Aeronautical Society of India, Advisor to Government of Andhra Pradesh, Member National Security Advisory Board, spoke about the ability of the Andhra Pradesh government to enhance the defence manufacturing capability of the country.

Cmdr PR Hari, IN (Retd), Chairman of ICC National Expert Committee on Defence, Aerospace and Space, CMD of Garden



Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Eastern Naval Command Vice-Admiral Sanjay Bhalla, among others, releasing the report at the ICC Defence Start Up and Autonomous Systems Summit organised in Visakhapatnam on Monday

Reach Ship Builders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) stressed on leveraging the innovative capabilities of MSMEs and startups to boost the modernisation of the defence manufacturing sector.

In his welcome address, Dr Rajeev Singh, Director

General, Indian Chamber of Commerce, appreciated the government's efforts of indigenisation of the defence manufacturing sectors through Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Cdr Gautam Nanda, co-chair of ICC National Committee of Defence,

Aerospace and Space also spoke. The summit witnessed the release of a report titled 'Defence Production Powering Industrial Growth'.

It also included a support desk to cater to the needs of the MSMEs and start-ups.

Youth participation key for development: Madhav



BJP State president Madhav interacting with students at CMH School on Monday

- State BJP president PVN Madhav visits City Municipal Corporation High School
- Inspects classrooms and enquires students about academic activities, aspirations

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

THE participation of youth is vital for national development, State BJP president PVN Madhav said. He said that today's youth represent the future of the country. He was speaking after visiting the City Municipal Corporation High School at Vankayalavari Street here on Monday. The programme was organised under the aegis of Sphurthi Foundation, where he interacted with students along with local BJP leaders. During his visit, Madhav

inspected classrooms and interacted with students, enquiring about their academic activities and aspirations. Addressing the gathering, he said Prime Minister Madhav posed questions to students on the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme and distributed prizes to those who answered correctly. He said such initiatives help students develop awareness of current affairs while nurturing leadership qualities and a sense of responsibility towards society and the nation.

Later, the BJP leader felicitated school headmaster P Durga Prasad for his efforts in maintaining academic standards and effective school administration. BJP leaders Nagendra, Kamalesh, Kuraganti Satish, Harika and Eswar were present at the programme.

INTER STUDENT ENDS LIFE

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

A 19-year-old Intermediate second-year student reportedly committed suicide by jumping in front of a moving train at the Vijayawada railway station late on Sunday night. He was scheduled to appear for the Intermediate second-year examinations beginning on February 24.

The deceased, Mudavath Ganesh Naik, was a student of Sri Gosalites Medical Academy at Poranki in Penamaluru. According to police, he reportedly left the college hostel after being reprimanded by the Principal following a clash between senior and junior students on the campus. Sources said the student allegedly jumped over the college compound wall on Sunday night

and reached the railway station, where he came under the Godavari Express on Platform No 7. Ganesh Naik hailed from Burujupalli Thanda of Mullapadu village in Giddalur mandal of Markapuram district. His father Balaji Naik and mother Adilakshmi were informed by Government Railway Police (GRP) officials after his identity was established through the mobile phone found in his pocket. Police sources stated that he had been under stress due to poor marks in the first year and academic pressure. His family had reportedly paid Rs 2.25 lakh for the first year and Rs 2.85 lakh for the second year of study. A case has been registered by the GRP, and the body was sent for postmortem before being handed over to the family.

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TIRUMALA LADDU GHEE ROW

COUNCIL DEADLOCK ENDS, DEBATE SET FOR FEB 26

- Legislative Council proceedings stalled for five days amid YSRCP protests over alleged adulteration in Heritage Foods, Indapur Dairy, and Tirupati laddu
- Opposition members storm the podium, raise slogans and demand an immediate debate; TDP accused them of obstructing business
- Govt finally agrees to a detailed discussion on Feb 26, bringing relief after repeated disruptions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

PROCEEDINGS of the Legislative Council were disrupted for the fifth consecutive day on Monday amid continuing protests by Opposition YSRCP members over the alleged adulteration controversy involving Heritage Foods, Indapur Dairy and the Tirupati laddu. The deadlock finally ended after the government agreed to hold a detailed discussion on the issue on February 26.

Soon after the House assembled at 10.03 am, members of the YSRCP, Dr Mondithoka Arun Kumar, Y Sivarami Reddy, and Suryanarayana Raju, submitted an adjournment motion seeking an immediate debate on the issue. However, Council

Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju rejected the notice and proceeded with Question Hour, triggering strong protests from the Opposition benches.

YSRCP members rushed into the well of the House, raised slogans, displayed placards and surrounded the Chairman's podium, demanding that the motion be admitted. Amid the uproar, health minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav completed his reply to a listed question before the Chairman adjourned the House briefly.

Before the adjournment, members of the TDP also rushed into the well of the House, alleging that the Opposition was deliberately obstructing Council proceedings. Some members attempted to display placards; however, civil supplies



minister Nadendla Manohar and finance minister Payyavula Keshav intervened and asked them to return to their seats. Amid the commotion, the Chairman adjourned the House briefly.

The Opposition later staged a protest in front of the Chairman's chamber, alleging that the government was avoiding a discussion on a matter of public concern. They also demanded the release of podium CCTV footage to counter certain media reports regarding their conduct inside the House.

In an effort to resolve the stalemate, the Chairman convened a Business Advisory Committee (BAC)

meeting. During the meeting, Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana strongly pressed for a full-fledged debate on the issue.

After nearly two hours of deliberations, the government agreed to allocate time for a detailed discussion on the Tirupati Laddu adulteration controversy on February 26. Later, Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana conveyed the government's assurance to the media at the media point. The decision brought relief to members across party lines, as repeated disruptions had stalled legislative business for several days. Following the consensus, the House reconvened

at 2.03 pm for Special Mentions before being adjourned for the day. The Chairman expressed hope that proceedings would continue smoothly in the coming days with the scheduled debate expected to address the concerns raised by the Opposition.

Meanwhile, BAC of the Council took several key issues and finalised the schedule for discussions. The Council will take up a debate on the home department on Tuesday (February 24) and the agriculture on Wednesday (February 25). A discussion on the alleged ghee adulteration in TTD laddus has been scheduled for February 26. The Council will remain on holiday on February 28 and resume its sittings on March 4. Leader of the Opposition Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that the ruling party was making contradictory statements in the BAC meeting and in the House.

Finance minister Keshav rejected the charge, stating that the government has consistently maintained its readiness for a debate on the issue and accused Opposition members of politicising it.

Govt positive on clemency for prisoners: Home Minister

- Says the state govt is taking a positive stand on granting clemency to prisoners and introduces amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act during the Assembly Budget session
- The proposed reforms focus on rehabilitation over punishment, with improved educational opportunities for inmates and special Anganwadi centres inside prisons to support children of women prisoners

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government is taking a positive stand on granting clemency to prisoners, said home minister Vangalapudi Anitha on Monday.

Speaking on the eighth day of the Assembly Budget session, the home minister introduced a Bill in the Assembly seeking amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act. Addressing the House, she stated that the coalition government is committed to implementing meaningful reforms aimed at the transformation and rehabilitation of inmates.

Anitha said the government has already initiated several measures to reform prisoners and is implementing changes in line with the legislation introduced by the Centre. She emphasised that efforts are being made to improve educational opportunities for inmates, enabling them to pursue studies while serving their sentences.



Home Minister V Anitha introducing a Bill seeking amendments to the Prisons and Correctional Services Act in the Assembly on Monday

Highlighting the need for legislative changes to bring about behavioural transformation among prisoners, the minister said the proposed amendments would focus on rehabilitation rather than mere punishment.

She also announced that special Anganwadi centres are being set up inside prisons to cater to the children of women inmates, ensuring their welfare and early childhood care.

The home minister further explained that prisoners would be classified into categories based on their criminal history and conduct in jail. This classification would help in designing reform-oriented programmes tailored to individual needs.

To encourage psychological transformation and reintegration into society, the government is establishing open-air prisons. In these facilities, inmates will be allowed to engage in agriculture and other vocational activities, equipping them with skills for livelihood after their release.

Reiterating the government's reformatory approach, Anitha said the administration is focused on creating opportunities for change and rehabilitation, while maintaining law and order in the State.

Govt allocated Rs 51,00 cr for BC welfare, says Savitha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

BC, EWS welfare, handlooms and textiles minister S Savitha announced that the new State Budget allocates a lion's share of funds for the welfare and empowerment of Backward Classes (BCs).

Speaking during the Assembly debate on the BC Welfare Department Budget, she said Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has accorded top priority to BC development.

Out of the total Budget exceeding Rs 3.32 lakh crore, Rs 51,020.56 crore has been

earmarked for backward classes. The Minister said Rs 250 crore has been allocated for the 'Nethanna Bharosa' scheme, under which weavers will receive Rs 25,000 annually. Another Rs 250 crore has been earmarked for the Nethanna Bharosa initiative, while Rs 150 crore has been set aside for power subsidy to weavers.

Savitha announced that 20 MJP BC residential schools will get permanent buildings at a cost of Rs 500 crore under the SASCI scheme. Six MJP schools are being upgraded into junior colleges, and IIT/NEET coaching centres will

be established at Simhachalam and Tekulodu schools. CCTV cameras, RO plants, UPS systems, mosquito-proofing, and improved food quality are being ensured in hostels and Gurukuls.

The minister said a dedicated commission under Rajiv Ranjan Mishra has been appointed to implement 34 per cent reservations for BCs in local bodies and nominated posts. The government is also finalising a BC Protection Act and has passed a resolution seeking 33 per cent reservations for BCs in legislatures.

She added that Rs 1,000



crore will be spent on Adarana 3.0, and sewing machines will soon be distributed to women trained under free tailoring programmes. Criticising the previous regime, Savitha alleged that BC welfare was neglected earlier. She asserted that BCs have received true political representation and empowerment only under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership.

TOUGH LAW ON THE CARDS TO CURB SOCIAL MEDIA MISINFORMATION

- HM informs House that Cabinet sub-committee has been formed to study measures against false propaganda and harmful online content
- 1,384 cases registered in 20 months; over 1,000 arrests made for objectionable posts

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Assembly on Monday held a detailed discussion on regulating misinformation and harmful content on social media platforms.

Responding to a question raised by MLA Gouthu Sirisha, home minister Vangalapudi Anitha said that the gov-

ernment has constituted a Cabinet sub-committee to examine measures to curb false propaganda and objectionable content online. The minister informed the House that the sub-committee has met twice so far and held extensive discussions on various aspects of social media regulation. She said the government has reviewed the measures being implemented in states such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, as well as in other countries, to understand best practices.

"We are carefully examining what kind of legal and administrative measures would be most effective in our State," the Minister said. She emphasised that strict action is being taken against posts that are hateful, abusive, or intended to spread misinformation.

Providing data on enforcement, Ani-

tha revealed that 1,384 cases have been registered in the State over the past 20 months in connection with objectionable social media posts. Of these, 1,067 individuals have been arrested and produced before the courts.

The home minister further stated that the government has initiated steps to bring in a new law aimed at effectively curbing the spread of false propaganda on social media platforms. She also said that the government is considering legislation to restrict school students from using social media, with the objective of safeguarding their well-being and academic focus. Reiterating the government's commitment, Anitha said that maintaining public order and preventing the misuse of digital platforms remain top priorities.

Over 88L unorganised workers register on e-Shram portal in AP

- Labour minister informs the Assembly that 88,16,453 unorganised workers have registered on the e-Shram portal, while 18,24,221 workers enrol with the AP Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board
- Says the state govt is accelerating registrations to ensure full coverage and extending benefits including free medical care, maternity aid of Rs 20,000, marriage assistance of Rs 40,000, Rs 60,000 natural death compensation and Rs 20,000 funeral support
- Scholarships for kids of construction workers and special skill development programmes are being implemented, besides comprehensive data collection to strengthen worker welfare and social security

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

AS many as 88,16,453 unorganised sector workers in the state have registered on the e-Shram portal, while 18,24,221 workers have enrolled with the Andhra Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Board, labour minister Vasamsetti Subhash informed the Assembly on Monday.

Responding to a question raised by MLA Dr Valmiki Partha Sarathi, the minister said the government under Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is firmly committed to

the welfare of unorganised labourers and is accelerating the registration process across the State to ensure comprehensive coverage. He said several welfare schemes are being implemented to provide financial security and social protection to workers.

Registered beneficiaries are being provided free medical services and periodic health check-ups.

The government is extending maternity assistance of Rs 20,000, marriage assistance of Rs 40,000, and financial aid of Rs 60,000 in case of natural death. An immediate assistance of Rs 20,000 is also provided to-

wards funeral expenses.

Scholarships are being offered to children of construction workers studying from Classes I to XII.

The Welfare Board is also organising special skill development programmes to enhance the capabilities of building and construction workers and improve their employment prospects.

The minister added that the government is undertaking comprehensive data collection to ensure complete coverage and safeguard the well-being of workers and their families.



MILK SCARE: MINISTER ORDERS PROBE, ASSURES SAFETY

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

IN the wake of the suspected adulterated milk incident in Rajamahendravaram, medical and health minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav directed officials to submit a detailed report on the collection and testing of milk and edible oil samples in the city.

On Monday, the minister instructed the Institute of Preventive Medicine (IPM - food safety wing) to provide comprehensive details regarding the samples collected for monitoring and the status of their laboratory results. He specifically asked IPM director Neelakanta Reddy and other senior officials to assess the functioning of the Food Safety Department in light of the recent incident.

The minister also held telephonic discussions with health secretary Saurabh Gaur, commissioner of health and family welfare Veerapandian, IPM director Neelakanta Reddy,

and other senior officials. He directed them to ensure that the victims undergoing treatment in hospitals receive the best possible medical care without any lapses. He emphasised continuous monitoring at all levels in coordination with district medical and other departmental authorities until the affected families are fully reassured. Satya Kumar informed the Assembly that samples collected from the accused milk supplier have been sent to laboratories and that results are expected within 72 hours. As a precautionary measure, blood samples have been collected from members of the 106 families supplied by the accused dairy operators. Samples from victims have been sent to laboratories in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Hyderabad for detailed analysis. He explained that the laboratory findings would help determine the nature of the chemicals mixed in the milk and the method of adulteration. Doctors are providing

appropriate treatment based on the victims' pre-existing health conditions, medications, and current symptoms.

Following the minister's directions, senior officials Veerapandian and Neelakanta Reddy rushed to Rajamahendravaram to oversee the situation. Making a special statement in the Assembly, Minister Satya Kumar said the situation in Rajamahendravaram is under control and that the government is prepared to take strict action based on laboratory findings.

He added that samples of cattle feed, water, and fodder have also been collected and sent to laboratories in Vijayawada. Post-mortem samples are being forwarded to the Regional Forensic Laboratory for further examination.

Officials from the health, animal husbandry, police and other departments are working in close coordination to address the situation and ensure public safety, the Minister affirmed.

Inter exams begin smoothly across state

- Over 5.24 lakh students appear for First Year exams
- Board secretary Ranjith Basha inspects centres, reviews arrangements

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Intermediate Public Examinations (IPE) March 2026 for the academic year 2025-26 commenced smoothly across the state on Monday, with no untoward incidents reported on the first day.

First-year students appeared for Second Language Paper-I at examination centres across the State. Out of a total of 5,45,028 registered candidates, 5,24,771 students attended the examination, while 20,123 were absent, according to officials.

Secretary of the Board of Intermediate Education (BIE) Ranjith Basha monitored the conduct of examinations through cameras at the State Command



Students going in to examination hall at a college in Vijayawada on Monday as Intermediate First Year examinations commence

Photo: Ch Venkata Mastan

Control Room. He also personally inspected several centres in Mangalagiri, including Vijay Jyothi Junior College and Narayana Junior College.

During the visit, he reviewed facilities provided to students, CCTV surveillance systems and the secure handling of question papers and OMR sheets in strong rooms. Officials confirmed that all centres

were under continuous monitoring. Strict security arrangements and a malpractice-free policy were enforced. Adequate drinking water and ventilation facilities were ensured for students, he added.

Furthermore, he congratulated students and staff for the successful conduct of the first day. He advised candidates to reach their respective centres at least 30 minutes

before the start of subsequent examinations.

Meanwhile, some first-year students faced difficulties in locating their respective examination centres, leading to confusion on the opening day. Heavy traffic in parts of Vijayawada further delayed movement, causing several candidates to reach their centres at the last minute.

To prevent inconvenience to students, NTR district police personnel stepped in to regulate traffic near major junctions and examination centres.

Special arrangements were made to ensure smooth vehicular movement and safe passage for candidates.

Meanwhile, the second year examinations will commence on Tuesday, February 24, with as many as 5,26,141 students expected to appear for the Language Paper-II examination.

Based on the experience of the first day of first-year exams, Board officials have advised second-year students to reach their examination centres well in advance to avoid last-minute inconvenience and ensure smooth entry procedures.

40 Maoists still active in State: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

WITH the deadline for the complete eradication of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) approaching, Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said on Monday that as many as 40 Maoists are currently active in various parts of the State. The Chief Minister told the State Assembly while answering a query asked by the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) MLA Dhruva Charan Sahoo.

The Chief Minister said that at present, around 40 active Maoists are operating in small groups in certain areas of Kalahandi, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Boudh, Bolangir, and Bargarh districts. In his reply, Majhi also added that due to concerted effort by the security forces, there has been a gradual improvement in the situation arising out of the Maoist problem in the State.

He said that as per the current status under the Union government's Security Related Expenditure Scheme, only Kandhamal district has been placed under the category of "Other LWE Affected District", areas experiencing moderate to low levels of Maoist violence, while



the remaining eight districts -- Malkangiri, Koraput, Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Boudh, and Bolangir -- have been categorised under "Legacy and Thrust" districts.

The districts categorised as "Legacy districts" are no longer significantly affected by the LWE violence, while "Thrust districts" are those where there is a possibility of expansion of Maoist activities. The Chief Minister not-

ed that the State government is working towards resolving the Maoist problem in Odisha by the deadline of March 31, 2026, set by the Union government. He also highlighted various steps being taken by the State government to completely eradicate LWE in India.

According to the Chief Minister's reply, 71 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces, 44 Special Operations Group (SOG)

teams, about 839 personnel of the District Voluntary Force (DVF), 40 platoons of the India Reserve Battalion, 29 platoons of the Special Security Battalion, and more than 92 platoons of Odisha Special Striking Force (comprising ex-servicemen) have been deployed in the affected areas.

The Odisha Police is also regularly carrying out intelligence-based operations and preventive area domination

operations in the nine Maoist-affected areas. Drones, interceptors, modern weapons, and advanced communication equipment are being used in anti-Maoist operations. Two Maoists have been neutralised in Kandhamal district on February 22.

Following neutralisation of the Maoists, the security forces are carrying out massive combing operations in Nandabadi jungle in the Kandhamal district.



Speaker holds all-party meet amid Oppn protest

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha Assembly continued to witness massive disruptions on Monday as the members of the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Indian National Congress (INC) staged protests over chaos at mandis and Epstein file issues. As the Question Hour began at 10.30 am on Monday, members of the BJD rushed to the Well of the House, holding posters and raising anti-government slogans near the Speaker's dais, alleging massive paddy procurement mismanagement at the mandis across the State.

They alleged that the BJP-led State government betrayed the farmers, who are under severe distress due to the non-lifting of paddy and the non-payment of MSP. The Congress members also created a ruckus in the House, demanding discussions on the Epstein files. The Congress members demanded the resignation of Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri over his name appearing in the Epstein files. The Opposi-

tion members also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Epstein files.

Meanwhile, BJP MLAs protested the criticism of PM Modi and the Union minister, saying that they are not members of the House. Speaker Surama Padhy repeatedly appealed to Opposition members to return to their seats and allow the House to function. However, the members paid no heed, and the protest continued. The ruckus forced the Speaker to adjourn the House multiple times before finally suspending proceedings until 4 pm.

The Speaker also convened an all-party meeting to end the logjam in the Assembly, which had continued since the start of the Budget session on February 17.

Speaking to mediapersons outside the House, senior BJD leader Dibya Shankar Mishra strongly criticised the State government over the stalemate in the Odisha Assembly. He announced that the BJD will intensify its agitation and stage a major protest in Bhubaneswar

on Tuesday over farmers' issues. "I am ashamed to see the current state of affairs. In a democracy, governance is meant for the welfare of the poorest of the poor, farmers, Backward Classes, and deprived communities. Unfortunately, this government has failed to understand the true meaning of welfare," he said. Mishra accused the government of neglecting the farming community despite rising input costs.

He alleged that the promise of 100 units of free electricity for farmers had not been fulfilled and claimed that, although the government had spoken about increasing the Minimum Support Price (MSP), farmers were not receiving the declared benefits. He further pointed out that the cost of seeds, fertilisers, and other agricultural inputs had risen significantly, yet adequate support for cultivators was still lacking. He further demanded loan waivers for farmers, the lifting of procurement caps, and the assurance of procurement of surplus paddy.

IRS officer accused of sexual assault

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

A day after the disturbing incident of gang-rape of a minor student by her teachers at a private school in Kendrapara district came to light, fresh reports emerged on Sunday regarding a complaint filed by a woman alleging sexual abuse by a senior Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer in Bhubaneswar.

Acting on the complaint lodged on February 19, the Commissionerate Police has launched an investigation into the allegations by registering a case in this regard on February 20. The victim woman, who hails from Kujanga in Jagatsinghpur district, alleged in her complaint that she, along with the accused's cousin sister, had gone to the IRS officer's official quarters at Satsang Vihar under Saheed Nagar police station area on January 15.

Meanwhile, the young woman was left alone in the quarters as the IRS officer's wife and cousin reportedly went out for some work. Taking advantage of the situation, the accused IRS officer allegedly showed some ob-



jectionable contents on his laptop and insisted that she keep sexual relations with him. The victim lady later claimed that upon her denial, the accused raped her after locking the door. She initially did not divulge anything fearing social stigma.

She also claimed that the accused clicked some objectionable photos of her and used those to blackmail her into keeping a relationship with him. The victim, however, claimed that after the accused made viral her objectionable photos, she was forced to file a complaint with the police in this regard.

Answering to queries on the incident, Police Commissioner S Dev Datta Singh on Sunday told mediapersons that the allegations would be thoroughly investigated, and that anyone found guilty would face consequences, while no one would be punished merely on the basis of accusations.

Zapolsky gets KIIT Lifetime Achievement Award

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

KIIT University conferred its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award on David A Zapolsky, Chief Global Affairs and Legal Officer, Amazon, during a special ceremony on Friday. The event was attended by Achyuta Samanta, Founder of KIIT and KISS, along with senior officials from Amazon India.

In a candid conversation with KIIT Vice Chancellor Saranjit Singh, Zapolsky highlighted Amazon's deepening engagement with India, the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence, and offered advice to students preparing for a rapidly evolving world. Highlighting India's growing importance in Amazon's global strategy, Zapolsky noted that the company has invested nearly USD 40 billion in the country, including major investments in data infrastructure and cloud computing. Amazon operates data centres in Mumbai and Hyderabad and last year alone committed an additional USD 35 billion to strengthen its India footprint.

"India is a leader in shap-



ing the global conversation around AI," he said, praising the clarity of vision articulated by the country. "No nation has expressed as clearly as India what it wants to achieve with AI. Our role will be to provide the infrastructure to support that ambition," Zapolsky said.

He announced Amazon's partnership with the government of India to expand AI and STEM education to reach 40 million schoolchildren across the country. The initiative focuses on skilling the next generation to become AI-capable workers. He emphasised that corporations must align CSR with their core competencies, noting that Amazon leverages its technological and logistical strengths for community im-

provement, particularly in disaster relief. On AI governance, Zapolsky made significant reference to regulation. He noted that while it is still early to understand how AI will be implemented fully, thoughtful regulation—backed by strong compliance frameworks—will be essential to ensure technology is deployed ethically and responsibly.

Addressing students, Zapolsky recounted his own unconventional career journey, from aspiring scientist and musician to prosecutor in Brooklyn and later Amazon executive. He urged the youngsters not to chase prestige or salary. "Listen to your gut. Do what makes you happy. When you pursue your passion, opportunities follow," he said.

73 Bangla infiltrators deported

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government has deported 73 of the 77 Bangladeshi infiltrators residing illegally in various districts of the State, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the Assembly on Monday. In a written reply to a question by BJP MLA Padma Lochan Panda, Majhi said action was initiated following directions from the Union Home Ministry.

"As per the instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on May 2, 2025, all superintendents of police were directed to expedite the process of identifying Bangladeshi infiltrators residing illegally in different districts, he said. The Chief Minister said so far the identities of 2,261 Bangladeshi suspects have been verified. Of them, 2,184 were found to be Indian citizens and subsequently released.

"The remaining 77 people were identified as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, of whom 73 have been deported," Majhi said. Among those deported, 24 were from Bhubaneswar Urban Police District, 21 from Jagatsinghpur, 15 from Cuttack Urban Police District, six from Berhampur Police District, three from Kandhamal, one from Koraput and three from Kendrapara, he informed the House.

Majhi said one infiltrator each from Ganjam and Kandhamal has been booked and is being tried in court for allegedly obtaining Indian passports using forged documents.

The deportation process of two Bangladeshi infiltrators identified from Bhubaneswar Urban Police District is currently underway, he added.

2,994 rape cases reported in Odisha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday informed the Assembly that 2,994 rape and 7,382 molestation cases were reported in the State last year. A total of 33,021 cases of crimes against women were registered in different police stations across Odisha in 2025, Majhi said in reply to a written question from BJD legislator Prasanna Acharya.

The Chief Minister said 1,183 cases of sexual harassment, 115 attempt to rape cases, 1,448 public disrobing of women, 7,378 abduction of women, 127 voyeurism, 4,361 dowry torture and 5,419 non-dowry torture cases were reported in the State last year. Similarly, 757 eve-teasing cases, 702 cases under Section 69 of BNS (sexual relationship with false promise of marriage), two under Section 68 of BNS (sexual relationship by a person in authority), 485 stalking, one attempt to acid attack case, 111 trafficking of women, 145 dowry homicide and 77 dowry-related suicide cases were also registered in 2025, Majhi said.

The Chief Minister said several steps have been taken to prevent crimes against women, including rapes, in the State. Bhubaneswar-based Crime Against Women & Children Wing (CAW&CW) has been monitoring the investigation of important and sensitive cases of crimes against women, classifying those as 'red-flag' cases. The wing appoints an investigating officer for regular monitoring of the sensitive cases and developments in the court of law, he stated.

THROUGH CRICKET, ITAO FOSTERS SOCIAL DUTY

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE IT Premier League 2026, a two-day cricket tournament, was held at PJ Ground, Kesura, here on Saturday and Sunday. The IT Association of Odisha (ITAO) hosted the event to promote social responsibility through sports. The tournament featured nine teams competing in 16 matches. The final match culminated in a thrilling encounter between N Computing Team and Star Light Team on Sunday.

Batting first, N Computing Team was bowled out for 139 runs in the allotted 10 overs, setting Star Light



Team a target of 140 runs. Star Light struggled early with the bat. Although they tried to build momentum, the team was bowled out for 107 runs. N Computing Team clinched

the championship title. Initiated by ITAO president Avinash Pattnaik, the tournament was organised through the collective efforts of the association and its supporters. According to

the organisers, the tournament aimed to foster camaraderie, provide stress relief and boost workplace efficiency.

ITAO secretary Debashish Tripathy said the cricket tournament was dedicated to the community, with plans to enhance inclusivity for future events. As the IT Premier League enters its 16th year, efforts are underway to expand participation and actively promote cricketing talent from rural areas and colleges. Computer companies, distributors, and dealers from across Odisha participated in the tournament. Cricket enthusiasts from leading IT companies also showcased their talent in the League.

Where healthcare falters, superstition fills the void

C B SINGH
RAYAGADA

IN a small settlement in Rayagada's Baising gram panchayat, Mariguda is gripped by a supernatural fear. Villagers believe malevolent spirits have invaded their community, citing a cluster of sudden deaths, erratic behaviour and smoke rising from trees.

Doors remain shut even during day. Instead of seeking clinical care, many residents utilise traditional healers, incantations and rituals akin to exorcism. Funds are being raised to banish the unseen

force through elaborate ceremonies.

Science rarely views such episodes as mysterious. Communities facing sudden illness clusters often grapple with infectious diseases, environmental contamination, or untreated chronic conditions. Symptoms interpreted as possession delirium, seizures, hallucinations, or sudden weakness can arise from malaria, encephalitis, toxic exposure, or severe dehydration. Visible vapours rising from trees often stem from natural processes, such as trapped moisture vapourising in the

heat or fungal decay.

Psychology also offers insight. Collective anxiety can spread rapidly in close knit populations, especially where access to education and healthcare is limited. When uncertainty meets grief -- as with five deaths within months -- the human mind instinctively seeks patterns and agency. Known as mass psychogenic illness, this phenomenon causes genuine physical distress without any organic or supernatural cause.

Locals blame the crisis on construction near the Nagavali river, claiming it disrupt-



ed ancestral, protective rites. While respecting cultural memory is important, assertions of causality require rigorous testing. Environmental assessments, medical screening, and transparent communication are far more reliable tools than costly rituals that burden vulnerable families.

The situation in Mariguda illustrates a broader challenge of the present era: scientific knowledge has advanced dramatically, yet its benefits remain unevenly distributed. Where healthcare access is fragile and trust in institutions is thin, superstition

fills the vacuum. Instead of ridicule, the solution lies in active engagement: mobile health camps, localised disease surveillance, community education in local languages, and partnership with trusted leaders.

Science does not dismiss fear. It investigates it. By replacing speculation with evidence, communities can protect both dignity and life. Mariguda's story, then, is not a ghost tale, but a plea to bridge the gap between knowledge and belief in a world where reason is not yet a universal language.

Sri Lankan Parliament shows the way for India

As far as setting an illustrious example goes, it is a matchless move. With the salaries and perks of MPs and MLAs in India rising at regular intervals, with generous dollops of additional facilities to go along ending with a generous pension to enable them to subsist in their sunset years (base pension of Rs 31,000 per month), what has been undertaken by Sri Lanka deserves loud applause. On February 6, the Supreme Court had determined that the Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Bill can be passed in Parliament with a simple majority. Its main aim was to repeal the Parliamentary Pensions Law No 1 of 1977, which had established a

non-contributory lifetime pension to persons who have ceased to be members of parliament. The Sri Lankan government has gazetted the Parliamentary Pensions (Repeal) Act after it was passed by 154 votes in the 225-member House, with only two against. Ostensibly, this move is to fund other essential public services, given the not-so-secure financial status that the island-nation has been embroiled in for nearly five years now.

But beyond tokenism, this move has been highlighted as fulfilling a key campaign promise of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who assured to do away with 'unjustified' political perks. In Sri Lanka, a

member of parliament was entitled to a pension after serving a five-year term. In contrast, just look at what is happening in our nation. As an additional service pension, for every year of service beyond the mandatory five-year term, an extra ₹2,500 per month is added to the base pension, including to all former members of either House of Parliament. The salary and pension structure is subject to revision every five years based on the Cost Inflation Index. The perks for former MPs include free train travel in first-class. The recent revision was announced in March 2025, with the changes effective retroactively from April 1, 2023. According to PRS India data,

historically, the average age of the Lok Sabha has risen from 46.5 years in the First Lok Sabha to over 55 in recent sessions, indicating a long-term shift toward older representatives.

The average age of Members of Parliament (MPs) in the 18th Lok Sabha (2024) is 56 years. This reflects an aging trend in Indian politics, with 52 per cent of MPs being over 55 years, while only 11 per cent are 40 years or younger. Even if an MP ceases to be one after a single five-year term, the individual is thus part of the gray train, irrespective of age. Interestingly, with a population share of 11 per cent, senior citizens in India are among the worst

treated ones. In an impassioned speech in Parliament, Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut had said that the government should kill all the senior citizens after 65 years because the government is not ready to pay attention to these nation builders and queried if it is a crime to be one. The other side of the picture is that senior citizens in politics are given all the benefits possible to MLAs, MPs or ministers and they also get pension. "Senior citizens have the right to change the government, do not ignore them. They have a lifetime experience of changing the government. Do not consider them weak," opined the mercurial MP. But will things change, is the moot question.

LETTERS

Engg education must move with the times

With reference to the article "The new blueprint for Engineering: Skills, speed and specialisation" by Prof Geeta Tripathi (THI Feb 23), I wish to emphasize the essential significance that engineering education must move with the times or risk being left behind in the fast lane of innovation. As Industry 5.0 builds upon AI, robotics, cloud computing and cyber-physical systems, the writing is on the wall: traditional degrees like engineering alone can no longer carry the whole weight of employability. Engineering education must balance theoretical depth with agility, speed and specialisation to build not just job seekers, but job creators.

Raju Kolluru, Kakinada

Galgotias episode is an eye-opener

With reference to the editorial "Upshots of the Galgotias robodog controversy" (Feb 23), the Galgotias University episode at the recent AI summit has rightly drawn attention to deeper issues in private higher education. While the robodog claim caused immediate embarrassment, the bigger concern lies in inflated patent numbers and misleading performance claims that many institutions use for rankings and advertisements. This erodes trust among students and parents, who invest heavily expecting genuine quality. To address this realistically, the UGC and NIRF should tighten verification of patent data—perhaps by giving more weight to granted patents over filed ones—and conduct random audits of self-reported metrics. Private universities must also face stricter oversight on marketing practices. This would strengthen the overall credibility of Indian higher education.

S M Jeeva, Chennai-32

Regulators must get tough post-Galgotias

Propos "Upshots of the Galgotias Robodog Controversy". The editorial makes a fair point that the real victims here are the students, who now carry the stigma of a degree from an institution caught in a fraud. That is deeply unfair to young people who had no say in their university's conduct. NIRF and NAAC rankings are taken seriously by students and parents when choosing institutions, yet as the article notes, neither body adequately captures the gap between private and public universities on critical metrics like patent quality. Regulators must also crack down on misleading advertisements. This incident should become a turning point, not just another forgotten controversy.

A. Myilsami, Coimbatore-641402

Onus on NIRF and NAAC

The Galgotias robodog controversy has raised uncomfortable questions about claims made by private universities and the systems meant to verify them. When exaggerated achievements go unchecked, it is students and parents who pay the price. Regulatory bodies such as NIRF and NAAC should refine their assessment methods, giving greater weight to verified research, patents granted, faculty quality and student outcomes. Periodic third-party audits and strict penalties for misleading advertisements would help restore credibility. Universities, too, must adopt transparent disclosure practices.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

Govt must ensure strict verification

This letter refers to your editorial, "Upshots of the Galgotias robodog controversy," (Feb 23). While the incident itself is embarrassing, the systemic issues it exposes regarding our higher education landscape are a matter of serious concern. The disparity in patent approval rates between premier public institutions and certain private universities suggests that quantity is being prioritised over actual innovation. To address this, the NIRF and NAAC must refine their evaluation metrics to emphasize quality and peer-reviewed impact rather than just raw numbers, while the government should implement stricter verification of technological claims made by universities in their advertisements.

K Sakunthala, Coimbatore-16

Need for a balanced reform agenda

The Galgotias robodog controversy underlines how fragile credibility can be in higher education. While the ridicule faced by students is regrettable, the larger issue is the weak performance of many private universities in research and patent approvals. This gap must be addressed through stronger oversight and transparent evaluation. Ranking bodies should move beyond cosmetic indicators and place greater weight on measurable outcomes such as patents, publications, and employability. A balanced reform agenda—combining stricter regulation with incentives for quality research—can help restore trust and ensure students are not penalised for institutional lapses.

Abbhana Barathi, Chennai-23

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BENGALURU ONLINE

Minister launches Amazon's 10th corporate office in state

BENGALURU: Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil on Monday inaugurated Amazon's newly constructed, fully equipped corporate main office spread across 11 lakh square feet (1.1 million sq.ft.) at Vinayaka Nagar near Yelahanka. Speaking on the occasion, he said, "This is Amazon's 10th corporate office in the State. The company, which has shared a two-decade association with Karnataka, plans to invest 35 billion dollars in India over the next four years. This investment is expected to support 15 million small businesses and generate lakhs of employment opportunities. Karnataka will receive a significant share of this investment." He pointed out that Karnataka has an annual per capita income of over ₹3.80 lakh, ranking highest in the country. The State also stands second in annual GST contributions to the national exchequer, contributing ₹1.6 lakh crore.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

Life must be protected, not 'pactually' abandoned



PROF MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

WHETHER it is the Constitutional law or criminal law, suicide cannot be accepted under any circumstances. Life is for living. No one has the right to die, but rather a duty to live and let others live.

The recent Supreme Court's dismissal of the appeal affirms a crucial criminal law principle: surviving a suicide pact does not erase legal responsibility when one has facilitated the other's death. The judgment, delivered by a bench of Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Manmohan, not only resolves a long-pending criminal dispute but also clarifies the jurisprudential position on abetment to suicide and the criminality inherent in mutual suicide arrangements.

Right to live under Article 21 cannot be extended to include 'right to die'. This significant case presents a delicate intersection of criminal liability, medical evidence, and the State's constitutional obligation to protect life under Article 21. Life is beautiful, whether killing herself or joining a lover, may be a thrilling cinema, but not in reality. In a pact of dying together, if both die, there may be no criminal case, but all those who abetted will be a criminal offence and culpable.

A beautiful heroine, Pratyusha, ended her life following a mutual agreement (?), while the surviving lover became a criminal.

At a broader constitutional level, the decision reinforces that the State's duty is not merely to punish after death but to create legal and social conditions that discourage suicide, prevent emotional coercion, and protect the sanctity of life.

The tragedy of Pratyusha is therefore not only a criminal case but a societal warning: Love cannot justify self-destruction; despair cannot legalise death; and survival cannot absolve complicity. The law,

ultimately, speaks with a humane yet firm voice: life is inviolable, and any pact to extinguish it invites both moral sorrow and legal consequence.

Analysis of the Pratyusha case:

The recent dismissal of the appeal by the Supreme Court in the 23-year-old case concerning the tragic death of the south Indian actress raises profound questions about criminal abetment, evidentiary evaluation, suicide prevention, and the legal culpability of a surviving partner in a suicide pact.

The judgment also emphasises evidentiary discipline, rejecting sensational claims unsupported by medical proof while upholding culpability grounded in established facts.

Love, opposition and a fatal pact:

It is again a story of love, opposition, and a fatal pact. The prosecution's case, accepted by the courts, was that the actress and Gudipalli Siddhartha Reddy were in a relationship despite opposition by his parents. In this emotionally charged setting, both allegedly consumed poison together. While she succumbed, he survived. He was thereafter convicted for: 1. Abetment to suicide; 2. Attempt to commit suicide.

The trial court imposed five years' imprisonment, later reduced to two years by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in 2004. The surviving accused challenged the conviction, while the victim's mother alleged rape, murder by strangulation, and inadequate sentencing.

The Supreme Court, after examining ocular and medical evidence, rejected allegations of rape and strangulation, holding that death was due to poisoning and that purchase of poison (neurotone) constituted abetment.

Survival as a liability!

The crucial legal principle reaffirmed by the Court is that a surviving partner in a mutual suicide pact can be legally culpable for abetment to suicide. This doctrine flows from Sections 107 and 306 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalise instigation, conspiracy, or intentional aid to commit suicide. The law does not treat suicide pacts as romantic acts of shared despair but as legally culpable agreements that normalise self-destruction. Thus, survival does not imply innocence. It may instead



The crucial legal principle reaffirmed by the Court is that a surviving partner in a mutual suicide pact can be legally culpable for abetment to suicide. The law does not treat suicide pacts as romantic acts of shared despair but as legally culpable agreements that normalise self-destruction. Thus, survival does not imply innocence. It may instead expose a participant to enhanced criminal scrutiny.

A judicial reasoning:

The oral pronouncement of the bench outlines a layered evidentiary assessment:

- Murder by strangulation ruled out
- Overwhelming ocular and medical evidence proved poisoning
- Rape allegations not established
- Related claims of rape and strangulation rejected
- Accidental consumption defence disbelieved
- Purchase of poison established abetment
- Unprofessional post-mortem report criticised
- Premature publication of medical findings condemned

These findings reflect the Court's reliance on forensic consistency, contemporaneous evidence, and legal causation, rather than speculative allegations emerging decades later.

Distinction between attempted suicide and abetment:

Attempts to commit suicide historically attracted punishment under Section 309 IPC, though contemporary mental health jurisprudence treats survivors with compassion. However, when a survivor is shown to have actively enabled the other's death, the law shifts focus

from mental vulnerability to criminal complicity.

Thus:

Mere survival may invite therapeutic response, while survival with facilitation invites penal consequences

Romantic myth vs criminal reality:

Popular culture often portrays suicide pacts as tragic expressions of love. Criminal law rejects this romanticism for three reasons:

- Suicide is not a private contract:** A pact to die together cannot be legally validated because life is constitutionally protected, the State has an interest in preserving life, and consent cannot legalise self-destruction.
- Power imbalance and emotional coercion:** One partner may be more vulnerable. Emotional dependence can turn a "mutual pact" into subtle coercion.
- Survival distorts the pact:** If one dies and the other survives, the survivor's role must be scrutinised: Was it equal participation, passive presence, or active facilitation? The law, therefore, pre-emptively that survival coupled with preparatory acts (like procuring poison) may constitute abetment.

State's duty to prevent suicide:

The constitutional guarantee of life under Article 21 imposes a positive obligation on the State:

- To protect individuals from self-harm;
- To regulate circumstances enabling suicide;
- To penalise those who facilitate self-destruction

Suicide is not merely a private tragedy; it is a constitutional concern involving dignity, mental health, and social responsibility. Criminalising abetment ensures that despair is not converted into a shared criminal enterprise.

A doctrinal clarification:

This case reiterates a settled but often misunderstood principle—a suicide pact is not a shield against criminal liability. Participation in planning, procuring means, or encouraging the act can constitute abetment if one partner dies. Thus, the law treats suicide pacts not as mutual consent but as shared participation in a legally prohibited act, where survival triggers accountability.

While the decision affirms criminal liability for abetment, it also indirectly underscores the importance of suicide prevention. Punishment alone cannot address the root causes of emotional distress, familial opposition, and social pressures. Preventive measures must include: Mental health counselling for vulnerable individuals; Social awareness about emotional coercion; Early intervention in toxic or high-pressure relationships; Responsible media reporting in celebrity tragedies; Law punishes facilitation, but society must prevent desperation.

Media and medical evidence:

An important aspect of the case is the Court's criticism of an "unprofessional" post-mortem report and premature publication of medical findings. This highlights two systemic concerns: Forensic evidence must be scientifically consistent and professionally verified; Media leaks of medical opinions can prejudice trials and distort public perception. By rejecting unsupported strangulation claims and relying on consistent ocular and medical evidence, the court reaffirmed the primacy of credible forensic science over sensational allegations.

Balancing compassion and accountability:

Modern jurisprudence recognises that suicide survivors may themselves be victims of mental distress. However, when evidence shows (a) Purchase of lethal substance, (b) Active facilitation, and (c) Knowledge of consequences, the law must respond not merely with sympathy but with accountability. The Supreme Court's approach reflects a calibrated balance: Reject exaggerated allegations (rape, strangulation); Affirm proven criminal facilitation (purchase of poison); recognise the survivor's culpability within evidentiary limits.

Evidentiary integrity:

The Supreme Court's refusal to accept rape allegations demonstrates a commitment to evidentiary rigour. Criminal law cannot sustain convictions on delayed or unsupported claims. While sensitivity to victims is essential, judicial fairness requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt. The judgment thus balances compassion with legal certainty.

(The writer is Advisor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

Inclusive governance gets an urban mandate in Telangana

AMARAVAJI NAGARAJU

THE outcome of the recent municipal elections in Telangana has done more than merely redrawing the political map of urban local bodies. It has reopened a substantive debate on representation, caste arithmetic and the evolving grammar of social justice in a rapidly urbanising State.

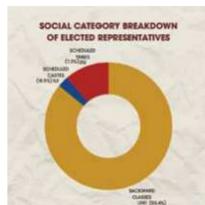
While local elections are often treated as peripheral contests, the scale and pattern of results across the State's 113 municipalities and corporations suggest a deeper political recalibration.

The Congress, which returned to power in the State promising "praja palana" (people-centric governance), has secured control in 90 municipalities. What distinguishes this verdict, however, is not merely the number of urban bodies won, but the social composition of those who now head them.

Approximately, 66 of the 113 municipal chairpersons are from Backward Class (BC) communities, which roughly translates to 61 per cent of the

total. In municipalities secured by the Congress, 51 chairperson posts have gone to BC leaders. Representation extends beyond titular leadership: BCs account for more than 60 per cent of key positions including chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, mayors and deputy mayors. At the ward level too, more than 55 per cent of elected councillors are from BC communities.

At the corporation level, the numbers are equally striking. Four of the seven mayoral positions are now held by BC representatives, marking a notable shift in the social profile of urban power centres. In a State where BC communities constitute a significant share of the population, and are deeply embedded in urban informal economies from small traders and artisans to service providers and lower-middle-class employees, this redistribution of political authority carries symbolic as well as practical weight. The Congress leadership has projected this outcome as validation of its commitment to institutionalising social justice. In the run-up to the Assembly



elections, the party had promised caste enumeration and 42 per cent reservations for BCs in local bodies. While legal and procedural complexities surround the full operationalization of such quotas, the party appears to have moved proactively in ticket distribution. Reports indicate that over 53 per cent of party nominations in municipal elections were given to BC candidates exceeding the stated reservation benchmark.

Critics may argue that candidate selection is ultimately a political calculation rather than a moral gesture. Yet electoral endorsement by voters suggests that the strategy has resonated. Urban constituencies, often perceived as less driven by caste considerations than rural ones, have demonstrated that social

Urban local bodies are not ornamental institutions. They oversee critical functions: water supply, waste management, road infrastructure, public health, urban planning and local taxation. The composition of leadership in these bodies shapes budget priorities and administrative focus. Enhanced BC representation may therefore influence policy choices, particularly in areas like slum upgrading, small enterprise facilitation; market infrastructure and welfare delivery for lower-income households.

identity and representational claims remain potent in towns and cities as well.

Broader implications merit closer scrutiny:

Urban local bodies are not ornamental institutions. They oversee critical functions: water supply, waste management, road infrastructure, public health, urban planning and local taxation. The composition of leadership in these bodies shapes budget priorities and administrative focus. Enhanced BC representation may therefore influence policy choices, particularly in areas like slum upgrading, small enterprise facilitation; market infrastructure and welfare delivery for lower-income households. At the same time, social justice in governance cannot be reduced to numerical dominance.

Telangana's municipal structure also accommodates representation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and other communities under constitutional mandates. The current distribution appears to reflect a layered inclusion rather than a zero-sum redistribution. Whether this balance endures will depend on the government's administrative prudence.

Politically, the municipal verdict strengthens the Congress's urban foothold at a time when local elections are increasingly interpreted as mid-term referendums. Consolidation among BC voters, a decisive social bloc in Telangana, could influence future Assembly and Parliamentary contests. Yet, as history repeatedly demonstrates, social coalitions are sustained less by symbolism and more by performance.

Tirumala laddu ghee row set for stormy debate in Legislature

Govt, YSRCP trade fresh allegations as Assembly and Council take up adulteration issue

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE politically sensitive Tirumala laddu adulterated ghee controversy is set to come up for a full-fledged discussion in state Legislature this week, with the state government announcing that the issue will be debated in the Assembly on Tuesday and in the Legislative Council on Thursday.

The issue has repeatedly disrupted the session that began on the 11th of this month. With the YSRCP having significant strength in the Council, adjournment motions over the laddu controversy have stalled proceedings almost every day. The controversy has escalated into a direct political confrontation between the ruling NDA coalition led by TDP and the opposition YSRCP. While the TDP, along with its NDA allies, initially targeted the previous YSRCP regime over the alleged adul-



teration of ghee used in the preparation of Tirumala laddu prasadam, the YSRCP in recent days has turned the attack towards Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his family-promoted company, Heritage Foods.

Chandrababu Naidu has maintained that he spoke on the issue only after receiving a report from the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), which, according to him, confirmed adulteration in the ghee supplied for Tirumala laddu preparation. He said laboratory reports revealed the presence of animal fat and that the Special In-

vestigation Team (SIT) probe established that the substance supplied was chemically manufactured and not genuine ghee. Based on the SIT findings, the government constituted a one-man committee to determine administrative responsibility. A petition filed by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy challenging the move was dismissed by the Supreme Court on Monday.

Naidu alleged that instead of accepting responsibility, the YSRCP was attempting to divert the issue and resort to character assassination. He accused YSRCP MLCs of making baseless allegations

against Heritage Foods to shield irregularities that allegedly occurred during the previous regime in the supply of ghee to the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD). He asserted that those responsible for the adulteration would be brought before the law and that the matter involved large-scale irregularities.

On the other hand, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Botcha Satyanarayana alleged that the Chief Minister was linked to the scam involving Indapur Dairy and that efforts were made to benefit Heritage Foods through TTD ghee contracts.

He claimed that Indapur Dairy and Heritage were closely associated, pointing out that Indapur was earlier listed as a manufacturing unit on Heritage's website and later described as a co-manufacturing unit after the controversy surfaced. According to him, between 2014 and 2019, TTD ghee contracts worth hundreds of crores were awarded to Indapur Dairy, and despite alleged failed lab tests in 2016,

the firm was allowed to continue supplies. He further alleged that the company did not participate in tenders during the YSRCP regime but re-entered after the coalition government assumed power.

The YSRCP on Monday also raised questions over pricing. It alleged that ghee supplied to TTD by Indapur Dairy was priced at Rs 658 per kg, while similar products were reportedly sold in the open market at around Rs 560. The opposition questioned why TTD was paying a higher rate and how the 10 lakh kg ghee tender for 2025 was finalised.

The opposition is also expected to raise issues relating to procurement decisions taken during the TDP regime in 2018, including the alleged induction of a private Bhole Baba Dairy into TTD through questionable certification and the reported purchase of small quantities of premium ghee specifically for aroma. With both sides preparing to present documents, reports and procurement data, the debate in the Assembly and Council is expected to be intense.

TIRUMALA GHEE ISSUE

SC clears AP's one-man panel; says no clash with SIT probe

- The apex court refuses to hear a petition by former MP Subramanian Swamy challenging Dinesh Kumar panel
- A Bench led by CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi rules the state's review is administrative and separate from the earlier SIT criminal investigation

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI



such remarks continued even after the investigation ended.

Appearing for the Centre, solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the Bench that the SIT's final report had already been filed and that it separately flagged certain administrative deficiencies unrelated to criminal wrongdoing. He said the State panel was tasked only with examining those issues. Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, for the State government, maintained that the petition largely relied on media reports and appeared intended to stall corrective administrative action. The dispute traces back to 2024, when Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu alleged that ghee supplied for Tirumala laddus during the previous YSRCP administration had been contaminated with animal fat. During earlier hearings, the Supreme Court had ordered a SIT probe and noted that available lab tests did not initially indicate the presence of such material.

Subsequently, reports indicated that the SIT's final findings, submitted in January, ruled out animal fat but identified adulteration with other unsafe substances along with irregular procurement practices that enabled substandard ghee supply.

Acting on a separate SIT note flagging administrative lapses, the State recently constituted a one-member panel headed by former AP Chief Secretary Dinesh Kumar to fix accountability and recommend further action—a move that leaders of the YSRCP have strongly protested over the past few days.

THE Supreme Court on Monday declined to entertain a plea by former MP Dr Subramanian Swamy opposing the Andhra Pradesh government's move to set up a one-man panel to review administrative shortcomings linked to the Tirumala laddu ghee controversy.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said the State's exercise was administrative in nature and separate from the criminal probe earlier conducted by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted under the Court's directions. The judges pointed out that the SIT had already completed its inquiry and that the new committee's role was confined to identifying accountability for procedural lapses highlighted during that investigation. With no overlap between the two processes, the Court said both could continue independently. Swamy had contended that initiating a fresh review after the SIT's work would weaken the credibility of its findings into alleged irregularities in the ghee procurement system of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. Representing him, senior advocate Rajsheshkar Rao argued that the move risked undermining the earlier probe and recalled that the Court had previously advised the Chief Minister to avoid public commentary while the matter was under scrutiny, adding that

Will place Tirumala ghee facts before Assembly today, asserts Lokesh

Continued from P1

"Doesn't such a senior leader know that the term 'co-company' doesn't even exist?" Lokesh asked, alleging that false information was deliberately being spread. Lokesh stated that Indapur Dairy is only a packing unit, while Heritage is a listed company. He pointed out that leaders of the YSR Congress Party, including Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, had filed complaints with SEBI against them.

The IT Minister called out YSRCP leaders for their wild allegations regarding ghee procurement. He challenged them to prove where a kilogram of ghee is available for Rs 360. "If ghee is being sold at Rs 360 per kilo, it can only be adulterated. The market price is usually above Rs 1,000," he pointed out.

Lokesh further alleged that during Jagan's five-year

tenure, Sakshi and Bharathi Cements had received Rs 1,000 crore from the government, while stating that his side had not taken a single rupee from the government.

Lokesh said that if India reaches the finals of a cricket match, he would certainly attend, adding that if needed, he would even buy a ticket for former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. Turning to the Legislative Council proceedings, Lokesh questioned why YSRCP members, currently seeking discussion on the Budget, had obstructed the Council for four days. "If they want smooth functioning, why did they block proceedings?" he asked. Lokesh emphasised that the government would present detailed facts on the Tirumala ghee issue in the Assembly on Tuesday.

CCPA slaps ₹15L penalty on Vajirao & Reddy

Continued from P1

The CCPA highlighted that the specific courses undertaken by successful candidates constitute material information for UPSC aspirants. Concealment of this information misleads prospective students regarding the efficacy and scope of the institute's programs, violating consumer rights under Section 2(9) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019. During the investigation, the Authority examined enrolment records and found that 431 forms lacked course details and submission dates, and many others indicated enrolment only in "Interview Guidance Programmes" or mock interviews. This showed that several candidates had cleared the preliminary stages independently and approached the institute solely for final-stage guidance.

The CCPA noted that Vajirao & Reddy Institute

had previously been penalised Rs 7 lakh for similar violations related to the UPSC CSE 2022 results. The recurrence of misleading advertisements warranted a higher penalty this time.

The Authority also emphasised the scale of impact, noting that approximately 11 lakh candidates appear for the UPSC exams annually. Misleading claims can distort expectations, influencing students and parents who invest significant time, effort, and money in competitive exam preparation.

So far, the CCPA has issued 57 notices to coaching institutes for misleading advertisements, imposing penalties totalling Rs 1.24 crore on 29 institutes. The Authority has directed coaching centres to ensure truthful and transparent disclosure of material information in their advertisements, enabling students to make informed academic decisions.

Tamil Nadu SIR complete

Continued from P1

The total electorate then stood at 5.43 crore, a drop from the previous 6.41 crore. However, after SIR, 34,75,717 applications were received both offline and online, including for inclusion. As many as 27.53 lakh eligible electors were added and 4.23 lakh ineligible electors were deleted during the period for filing of claims and objections from Dec 19 in 2025 to Jan 30.

As per the final electoral roll, the Assembly constituency with the highest number of electors is Shozhinganallur in Chengalpet district, with 5,36,991 electors — 2,62,621 men, 2,74,254 women, and 116 from the third gender. The Assembly constituency with the lowest number of electors is Harbour in Chennai district, with 1,16,896 electors — 58,221 men, 58,620 women, and 55 from the third gender.

'Leave Iran by all available means'

Continued from P1

Indians in Iran have also been advised to have their travel and immigration documents, including passports and IDs, readily available with them. They are requested to contact the Indian Embassy for any assistance.

The Indian Embassy has also issued emergency numbers and email: +989128109115; +989128109109; +989128109102; +989932179359. Email: cons.tehran@mea.gov.in. Indian nationals in Iran are also asked to register with the Indian Embassy.

The advisory comes after new anti-government protests erupted in Iran on Saturday following 40-day memorials for people killed in January during anti-government rallies. According to Iran's state news agency, students protested at five universities in the capital, Tehran and one in the city of Mashhad on Sunday.

A video geolocated by the news agency AFP of what appeared to be the demonstration at Sharif University showed a large crowd chanting anti-government slogans as they thronged around students waving the flag of the toppled monarchy.

The US and Iran will hold their next round of nuclear talks on Thursday in Geneva. Oman's foreign minister, Badr al-Busaidi, confirmed the talks. Oman previously hosted the indirect talks on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program and facilitated the latest round in Geneva last week.

The Trump administration on the other hand has ramped up the movement of military aircraft towards the Middle East, as negotiations over a potential nuclear deal with Iran remain fragile. Flight tracking data reveal a continuous stream of aircraft transporting personnel, munitions, and equipment towards the region.

CM announces ₹10L ex gratia

Continued from P1

Describing the incident as "very painful," Chandrababu said the victims were admitted to hospitals with symptoms including vomiting, severe stomach pain and kidney-related complications requiring dialysis. Clinical tests revealed elevated levels of urea and serum creatinine in their blood.

According to officials, milk supplied by Varalakshmi Milk Dairy in Narasapuram village of Korukonda mandal was distributed daily to 106 families in the affected localities. Authorities confirmed that those who consumed the milk fell ill. Four persons have died in the incident, three aged above 70 and one aged 58. Two patients are on ventilator support, while eight others are

undergoing treatment.

Milk and blood samples have been sent to laboratories in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam for detailed analysis. The dairy manager, Addala Ganeswara Rao, is being questioned by police, and a case has been registered based on complaints from the victims' families. "If anyone indulges in adulteration out of greed for money, the government will take it very seriously. We will act strictly after completing the investigation. We will not remain indifferent if anyone's actions endanger public health," the Chief Minister warned. After learning about the incident, the Chief Minister conducted a review meeting in the morning with the District Collector, Superin-

tendent of Police, and officials from the medical and health and food safety departments. He inquired about the treatment being provided and directed that the best possible medical care be ensured.

Officials informed him that samples had been collected from 75 affected individuals and that testing of the remaining families was underway. Chandrababu instructed food safety and health department officials to immediately proceed to Rajamahendravaram and personally monitor the situation. He later held another review with ministers and senior officials in his Assembly chamber, reiterating that stringent action would follow once the investigation establishes responsibility.

Maha seeks CBI probe into Ajit Pawar plane crash

Continued from P1

The Mahayuti government will ensure that all doubts regarding the plane crash are cleared, Fadnavis said at a press conference on Sunday on the eve of the budget session of the Maharashtra legislature. "I had received a letter from the NCP (an ally of the BJP) seeking a CBI probe into the air crash and spoke with Home Minister Amit Shah. Along with investigations by DGCA and state CID, there will be a probe by the CBI," he added. Ajit Pawar and four others onboard a chartered plane were killed when it crashed while attempting to land near Baramati in Pune district on January 28.

'Milk contamination' leaves four dead, 12 in hospital with anuria

Continued from P1

Amid extensive investigation and public outrage, District Collector Kirti Chekuri confirmed that four deaths linked to symptoms of acute kidney failure have been recorded so far. She told the media on Monday that 12 patients were undergoing treatment in different private hospitals and that their health condition was being monitored continuously. "We conducted a door-to-door survey and collected 73 blood samples. Milk samples obtained from 42 cattle connected to the supplier were also sent to Hyderabad laboratories for detailed analysis," she said.

The district collector said that blood tests are being conducted in 106 households where the vendor has supplied milk. Samples have so far been collected from 73 families under continuous medical supervision.

The Animal Husbandry Department tested 46 cattle and sent samples to scientific and veterinary laboratories, while Food Safety officials sent milk and curd samples to laboratories in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari district Superintendent of Police (SP) D Narasimha Kishore said post-mortem reports are awaited and the unauthorised dairy unit has been sealed. Based on the blood samples collected so far, Kishore said, children and elderly persons appear to be more affected and advised the public to consume only properly boiled milk for the next few days.

District Medical and Health

Officer V Venkateswara Rao said symptoms included nausea, vomiting and reduced urination, and most patients were aged above 60 years. He said epidemiological investigations were underway and clarified that there was no evidence so far of an infectious disease outbreak. Medical camps have been organised in affected areas and continuous surveillance is in place.

The incident surfaced after some residents of Chowdeswari Nagar and Swarooru Nagar near Lalacheruvu began vomiting, after abdominal swelling and stoppage of urine from February 15 onwards. Within days, 16 persons were hospitalised. Most of the victims are aged above 60 years, though a five-month-old infant and a three-year-old child were also affected. Two elderly patients, N. Seshagiri Rao (72) and Radha Krishnamurthy (74), died on Monday morning while undergoing treatment, raising the toll to four. Two others, B. Kanakaratham (76) and Tadi Krishnaveni (75) succumbed on Sunday. Doctors said that the condition of four patients undergoing treatment in hospitals remains critical. They suspect acute renal failure, pending confirmation through toxicology reports.

Preliminary medical inquiry suggests that all the families with affected individuals had consumed milk supplied by a single vendor from the Korukonda mandal. Residents told officials that milk and curd tasted unusually bitter on Maha Sivaratri day. Police have taken the milk

supplier, identified as Ganesh, into custody and seized materials from his premises for examination. Officials said the vendor collected milk from 46 farmers and supplied it to 106 households.

District Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore said special clue teams from Vijayawada were assisting in the investigation. "Post-mortem examinations have been completed and further cases will be registered based on forensic and laboratory reports," he stated.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the situation with senior officials and issued directions for strict monitoring and immediate action. The state government has announced ex gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased. "We are offering Rs 10 lakh financial compensation to the family of the deceased and free treatment for all those hospitalised," Naidu said. The CM ordered strict action against vendors. Tourism and Culture Minister Kandula Durgesh said the administration must remain alert and ensure quality treatment for victims, urging people to approach government hospitals if symptoms appear. Rapid Response Teams comprising health, food safety, municipal, veterinary and police departments have been deployed.

Political reactions followed the incident. YSRCP supremo Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the deaths in Rajamahendravaram and offered condolences to the bereaved families. He said 'negli-

gence' in food safety enforcement had endangered public lives and demanded stringent action against those responsible for the alleged adulteration. "Such incidents reflect serious lapses in monitoring mechanisms, and immediate corrective steps must be taken to prevent recurrence," Reddy said in a YSRCP press release.

Congress Working Committee Member Gidugu Rudra Raju went to the hospital and visited the anuria patients. He demanded that Rs. 1 crore be paid to the families of the deceased as ex gratia.

Communist Party of India leader Tatipaka Madhu demanded enhanced compensation of Rs 50 lakh for victims' families and called for a judicial inquiry into the alleged milk adulteration. Former MP Margani Bharat alleged that several patients showed dangerously high creatinine levels and urged strict action against those responsible.

Leaders from various parties visited the victims in hospitals and demanded improved medical facilities and compensation. YSRCP district president Chelluboina Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna, former MLA Jakkampudi Raja, YSRCP leader J Vijayalakshmi also went to the hospital and visited the victims. The district administration has appointed a nodal officer and set up a helpline (9494060060) for reporting symptoms. Officials appealed to residents not to panic and to follow health advisories while awaiting laboratory results that will determine the exact cause of the suspected contamination.

CM AIMS AT ₹54 LAKH PER CAPITA INCOME

Continued from P1

The Chief Minister announced that a commission has been constituted to implement 33 per cent reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) and that steps are being taken to enforce it before the upcoming local body elections. He said the government is examining demands from certain communities seeking inclusion in the BC list under SC and ST categories.

Referring to SC sub-classification, Chandrababu said credit for implementing proportional reservations goes

to the NDA government. On the issue of G.O. Ms. No. 3 concerning tribal reservations, which was struck down by the Supreme Court, he said the government would consult tribal groups before deciding the next course of action. The Chief Minister reiterated that the coalition government has ensured protection and welfare for minority communities and that long-term investments in education and healthcare, from Anganwadi to higher education, are central to securing the future of coming generations.

'Heartbroken with status of West Bengal under Mamata rule'

Continued from P1

"While on the one hand the youth are forced to migrate to other states for lack of employment opportunities, on the other, women of West Bengal are fearful and alarmed due to a lack of security," he added.

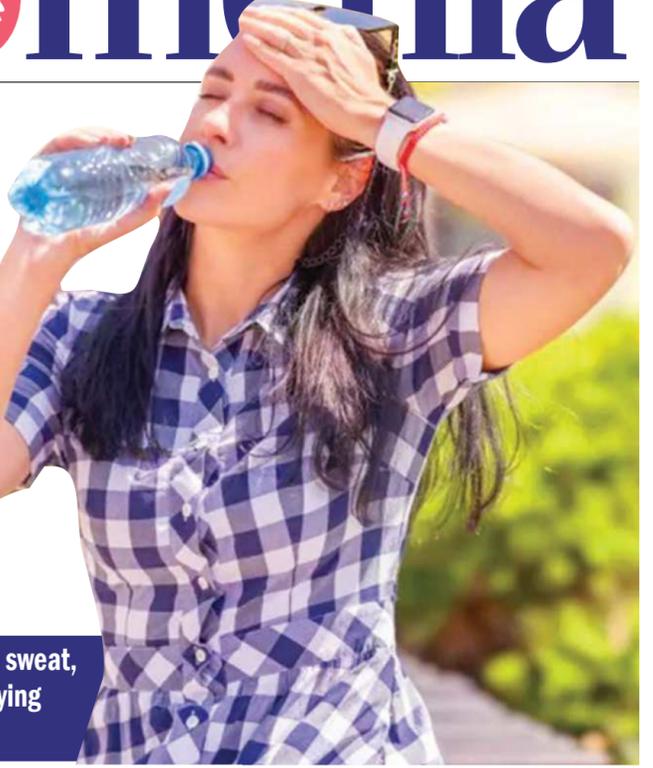
Naming Bengal's political and cultural icons such as Swami Vivekananda, Rishi Aurobindo, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rabindranath Tagore and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee at multiple points in his letter, Modi regretted the "darkness of chaos that grips West Bengal" in current times. "The

West Bengal visualised by its iconic forefathers, such as Swami Vivekananda and Rishi Aurobindo, is now riddled with vote bank politics, violence and anarchy. The son of the soil of this state, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, whose call for freedom had once stirred the whole country, that holy land is now blemished with infiltration and torture of women. Fake voters currently dominate Rabindranath Tagore's 'Sonar Bangla'. "The whole country is worried about the darkness of chaos that West Bengal is sinking into," the PM wrote.



W o m e n i a

Dehydration, headaches and low energy: Why women are more vulnerable in summer



As temperatures rise, dehydration becomes a common yet overlooked health risk for women. Fluid loss through sweat, hormonal changes, and daily responsibilities can quietly drain energy levels. Recognising early signs and staying consistently hydrated is essential to prevent headaches, fatigue, and serious heat-related illness

DR ANURADHA H K

Summer heat can be harsh on the body, especially for women. Dehydration happens when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. During hot weather, we sweat more to cool down. Sweating leads to loss of water and important minerals like sodium and potassium. If these fluids are not replaced, the body cannot function properly. Many women do not realise they are dehydrated until symptoms become strong. Mild dehydration can start with dry mouth, tiredness, and reduced urination. If ignored, it can become serious and lead to heat exhaustion or even heat stroke.

Why Women Are More at Risk

Women are often more



vulnerable to dehydration because of biological and hormonal reasons. The female body usually has a slightly lower percentage of water compared to men.

This means women may feel the effects of fluid loss more quickly. Hormonal changes also play a major role. During menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause,

hormone levels fluctuate. These changes can affect how the body regulates fluids. Some women experience bloating during certain phases of

the menstrual cycle, but this does not mean the body is well hydrated. In fact, dehydration can still occur even when bloating is present.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women need extra fluids because their bodies are supporting another life. If they do not drink enough water, they may feel dizzy, weak, or develop headaches more easily.

The Link Between Dehydration and Headaches

Headaches are one of the most common signs of dehydration. When the body loses fluids, blood volume decreases slightly. This reduces the supply of oxygen and nutrients to the brain. As a result, a person may experience a dull or throbbing headache. Many

women already suffer from hormonal headaches or migraines. Dehydration can trigger these headaches or make them worse. Sometimes, a simple glass of water can reduce headache intensity if dehydration is the cause. Ignoring repeated summer headaches can affect daily productivity and mental focus. It is important to consider hydration as a possible reason before taking medication.

Low Energy and Fatigue

Low energy is another common problem during hot months. When the body lacks enough fluids, the heart works harder to circulate blood. This makes a person feel tired and weak. Even small daily tasks can feel exhausting. Women who balance work,

household duties, and childcare may overlook early warning signs. Feeling unusually sleepy, dizzy, or irritable during summer could be linked to poor hydration.

Iron deficiency, which is common among women, can make this fatigue worse. When dehydration combines with low iron levels, the body struggles even more to maintain energy.

Simple Steps to Stay Hydrated

Preventing dehydration is simple but requires regular attention. Women should drink water throughout the day, even if they do not feel thirsty. Keeping a water bottle nearby can act as a reminder. Including natural fluids like

coconut water, lemon water, and buttermilk can help maintain electrolyte balance. Eating water-rich fruits such as watermelon, cucumber, and oranges also supports hydration. Wearing loose cotton clothes and avoiding direct sun during peak afternoon hours can reduce fluid loss. Limiting caffeine and sugary drinks is also important, as they can increase dehydration. If symptoms like severe headache, fainting, very dark urine, or rapid heartbeat occur, medical help should be taken immediately. Staying hydrated is one of the simplest ways women can protect their health and energy during the summer season.

(The writer is a Lead Consultant - Neurology, Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore)

Shilpa Shetty inspires fitness fans with high-intensity full-body workout video

Actress and fitness icon Shilpa Shetty continues to motivate fitness enthusiasts with her powerful workout routines, regularly sharing inspiring fitness content across her social media platforms. Known for her disciplined lifestyle and commitment to health, the actress once again caught attention with a new video showcasing an intense full-body compound workout designed to strengthen and stabilize the entire body.



In her latest post, Shilpa was seen performing a dynamic dumbbell-based compound exercise that engages major muscle groups including the core, legs, back, shoulders, and arms. The workout not only targets strength building but also focuses on stabilizing muscles that are essential for balance, posture, and joint control. Fitness experts often highlight such compound movements

as highly effective due to their ability to activate multiple muscle groups simultaneously. Sharing the clip, Shilpa captioned it, "Full body fired up, no muscle left behind," perfectly capturing the intensity of the session. She further elaborated on the long-term benefits of the exercise, noting that it is a high-intensity movement that combines

synchronized muscle engagement with explosive propulsion. According to her, the workout is ideal for short, time-efficient fitness routines and can be performed either in repetitions or timed intervals. With consistent practice, the exercise helps build overall endurance, strength, coordination, and power.

The Dhadkan actress has become a major source of motivation for fitness lovers, often pushing her limits and encouraging netizens to do the same. Her fitness journey is not just about aesthetics but also about building functional strength and long-term wellness.

Recently, Shilpa also shared another fitness video featuring the supine contralateral stability drill, an advanced exercise that improves core stability and neuromuscular coordination. Highlighting the importance of control in strength training, she wrote, "Strength

without control is incomplete." She explained that the drill challenges core stability, inner thigh engagement, pelvic control, and overall neuromuscular coordination, proving that even minimal equipment can deliver high-impact results when performed correctly.

The Sukhee actress continues to inspire people across age groups by promoting a balanced approach to fitness that focuses on strength, flexibility, control, and consistency. Through her videos, Shilpa Shetty not only showcases advanced workout techniques but also sends a strong message about discipline, self-care, and sustainable fitness.

With every post, she reinforces her status as one of the most influential fitness role models in the entertainment industry, motivating millions to prioritize health and embrace an active lifestyle.

Riya Munjal opens up about standing against eve-teasing

Actress Riya Munjal, who is currently earning praise for her performance in the popular television show Lakshmi Niwas, has spoken candidly about a powerful personal experience that reflects the strength of the character she portrays on screen. The actress recently opened up about standing up against eve-teasing during her college days, revealing how those real-life moments shaped her outlook and confidence.



The show is presently featuring an engaging storyline revolving around Bhoomika and Raj Bundela. Bhoomika, the youngest daughter of Srinivas and Lakshmi, is portrayed by Riya Munjal as a lively, affectionate, and emotionally expressive young woman. Her life takes an unexpected turn when millionaire Raj Bundela enters her world. Instantly drawn to Bhoomika, Raj approaches her family with a marriage proposal on the very first day they meet. His consistent support to the family during difficult times gradually earns their trust, prompting Srinivas and the rest of the family to seriously consider the alliance.

However, Bhoomika's journey is not just a romantic narrative. The character is shown navigating complex emotions and situations she is not fully prepared for. While she appears cheerful and carefree on the outside, Bhoomika's internal struggle reflects the pressure of family expectations, personal fears, and the process of finding her own voice. The ongoing track highlights her emotional maturity and

quiet resilience, making her character deeply relatable to many viewers.

Speaking about her real-life experiences, Riya shared that during her college days, she often encountered situations involving eve-teasing and inappropriate behaviour, either directed at her friends or herself. She revealed that she was never someone who could ignore such moments. Her instinct, she said, was always to speak up and confront the situation, even if she later reflected on the risks involved. According to her, in those moments, standing one's ground feels more important than fear.

Riya further explained that this instinctive courage is what connects her deeply to Bhoomika's character.

She described Bhoomika as someone who may seem bubbly and emotional but possesses a strong core of self-respect and inner strength. While the character takes time to process her emotions, she never compromises when it comes to dignity and standing up for what is right.

The actress believes that every girl carries this instinct within herself — the strength to resist, question, and stand firm — and that sometimes all it takes is the courage to act on it. With both her on-screen role and real-life voice, Riya Munjal is emerging not just as a promising performer, but also as a strong, relatable young woman audiences can connect with beyond the screen.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 4 A small, smooth stone (6)
 - 7 Ultimate (8)
 - 8 Finally (2,4)
 - 10 Instruments of torture (5)
 - 13 Rebuff (4)
 - 14 Jet-set jet (4)
 - 15 Kinds, types or sorts (4)
 - 16 Genetic material (3)
 - 17 Taj Mahal locale (4)
 - 19 Self-satisfied (4)
 - 21 Language of Kerala (9)
 - 23 Prefix for one thousand (4)
 - 24 Wild goat (4)
 - 26 Colourful Japanese carp (3)
 - 27 Painter Magritte (4)
 - 29 Notion (4)
 - 32 Microsoft's search engine (4)
 - 33 Affected grin (5)
 - 34 Menace (6)
 - 35 Dr ___ Prasad : First President of India (8)
 - 36 Attractive (6)

DOWN

- 1 Found in an oyster (5)
- 2 Birthplace of Mohammed (5)
- 3 OE letters (4)
- 4 Piece of wood (5)
- 5 Incandescent lamp (4)
- 6 Being bested? (6)
- 9 Fight or wrestle (6)
- 11 Roman bronze - "sea" change? (3)
- 12 South African pen (5)
- 13 Murdering (7)
- 15 Lyricist Gerstwin (3)
- 16 Strange or odd (3)
- 18 "Oil rag" anagram for a girl (6)
- 20 Principle of conduct (5)
- 21 1002 in Roman numerals (3)
- 22 Abraham's pet name (3)
- 23 Legitimate (6)
- 25 Always in verse (3)
- 28 Way in (5)
- 30 Electronic valve (5)
- 31 Mogul emperor called the Great (5)
- 32 Not straight (4)
- 33 Procedure part (4)



Solution to February 23

SUDOKU



Solution to February 23

For decades, India has been recognised as the pharmacy of the world, and today, under the present government, the country is transitioning toward becoming the innovator of the world, with healthcare security, manufacturing resilience and scientific excellence at the centre of the national development, he said

- J P Nadda, Union Minister

BIZ BRIEFS

Amazon unveils office in B'luuru

Amazon announced the opening of its second largest office in Asia in Bengaluru. The 1.1 million square feet, 12-storey campus will support over 7,000 employees across e-commerce, operations, payments, technology, and seller services in India. Built on a five-acre site approximately 15 kilometres from Kempegowda International Airport, the corporate building was officially inaugurated by Dr. M.B. Patil, Minister for Large & Medium Industries and Infrastructure Development, Government of Karnataka.

Apollo opens 1,000th store

Apollo Pharmacy, a pharmacy network, announced the opening of its 1,000th store in Andhra Pradesh in Visakhapatnam. With this launch the store now operates across 15 districts of Andhra Pradesh, employs over 7,000 people, and provides access to over 50,000 genuine medicines. P Jayakumar, added: "Reaching 1,000 stores in Andhra Pradesh is a significant milestone in our journey to build India's most trusted and accessible pharmacy network. We are strengthening our presence across the state."

ITC inaugurates hotel in Mohali

ITC Hotels announced the launch of its 30th Welcomhotel in Mohali, Chandigarh. The hotel with 113 keys, expands its portfolio and its presence in fast-growing Tricity region comprising of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. Anil Chadha, MD, ITC Hotels Limited, said: "The launch of Welcomhotel Mohali reflects our commitment to strengthening our presence in high-growth urban markets while delivering enriching experiences rooted in our renowned service excellence."

SBI Life's new branches

SBI Life Insurance, a private life insurer, has strengthened its presence in Telangana with the inauguration of three new branches in Bhupalapalli, Khammam, and Nagarkurnool districts. The branches were inaugurated by Abhishek Kar Majumdar, Regional Director - Telangana, SBI Life Insurance. This expansion underscores the company's continued commitment to enhancing insurance accessibility and delivering need-based financial solutions to individuals and families across the state.

Sankara Eye hospital's fete

Sankara Eye Hospital, Hyderabad, has successfully restored vision for two elderly patients through modern cataract surgery. Dr. Sriram Simakurthy, CMO, Sankara Eye Hospital, Hyderabad, said: "Cataract remains one of the leading causes of vision impairment among the elderly, but it is also one of the most treatable conditions today. With advanced technology and skilled surgical expertise, patients can undergo safe procedures with minimal discomfort."

Olectra secures order for 1,085 e-buses from TGSRTC

Hyd roads to go abuzz with e-buses making city more environment friendly

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

OLECTRA Greentech Ltd., electric commercial vehicle manufacturer and a pioneer in advanced urban mobility solutions, has secured a Letter of Intent (LOI) issued by the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) through Evey Trans Pvt. Ltd. for 1,085 electric buses under the PM E-DRIVE initiative, led by Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL), aimed at accelerating the adoption of electric public transport across Indian cities.

The electric buses will be deployed in Hyderabad, further strengthening the city's clean, efficient, and sustainable public transport ecosystem. The company has firmly established itself as India's leading electric commercial vehicle brand, consistently holding the No. 1 market share in electric buses both year-to-date and in the last financial year. Headquar-



tered in city, Olectra has been at the forefront of India's electric mobility transition, delivering not only electric buses but also electric tippers that support sustainable urban infrastructure development. With over 3,600 electric vehicles deployed across the country and an order book exceeding 10,000 vehicles, the company is building a comprehensive zero-emission mobility ecosystem. Having clocked more than 500 million green kilometres, the company combines scale, indigenous engineering, operational reliability, and continuous innovation to drive India's shift towards

clean and future-ready transportation.

Mahesh Babu, Managing Director of the company said, "This is a defining moment for the Olectra family and a significant milestone in our journey of powering India's electric mobility transformation. Our continued commitment to the Make in India vision and to building world-class electric buses has received strong reinforcement through this prestigious order under the PM E-DRIVE programme. We are proud to bring our advanced, reliable, and indigenously developed electric mobility solutions to Telangana."

Finance Minister asks banks to refocus on core business

Nirmala Sitharaman slams insurance push, mis-selling by banks

• RBI draft norms mandate refunds and compensation for mis-selling

• Public feedback on guidelines open till March 4; rules effective July 1

• FM flags regulatory gap between RBI and IRDAI

NEW DELHI: Articulating the strategic vision of the Union Budget while sharply calling out mis-selling by banks, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday urged lenders to refocus on their core business and place customers at the centre of financial intermediation.

Addressing the 621st meeting of the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Sitharaman outlined the roadmap of the Union Budget 2026-27,



saying it was inspired by the three Kartavyas and aimed at advancing the goal of Viksit Bharat. She underlined the role of the financial sector in supporting sustainable growth amid global uncertainty and domestic challenges.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Sitharaman came down heavily on banks for mis-selling financial products, particularly insurance, to customers who often

do not need them. "Banks should concentrate on their core business... you're spending more time selling insurance when it is not required," she said, describing mis-selling as a long-standing concern.

She pointed to a regulatory grey area where mis-selling fell "between two stools", with the RBI earlier assuming such practices were overseen by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority

of India (IRDAI), while the insurance regulator viewed banks as outside its direct ambit. This gap, she said, left customers exposed.

Her remarks come close on the heels of the RBI's draft guidelines issued on February 11 to curb mis-selling. Under the proposed framework, banks would be required to refund the full amount paid for a mis-sold product and compensate customers for losses suffered. Public feedback has been invited until March 4, with the norms slated to take effect from July 1. "The message should go to banks that you cannot afford to mis-sell," Sitharaman said.

She cited instances of loan-seeking customers being compelled to purchase insurance despite already having adequate cover, stressing that banks must assess actual customer needs rather than push unnecessary products.

Prism plans to add 300 hotels

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

PRISM, the parent brand of OYO, has announced plans to add 300 company-serviced hotels across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, with a strategic focus on Hyderabad, Warangal, Karimnagar and Khammam.

Prism said Telangana's improving infrastructure, growing air connectivity and strong domestic tourism make it a key expansion market. Ashish Saurabh, Regional Head, Prism, said: "Telangana is one of the most structurally strong hospitality markets in the country. Business hubs like Hyderabad continue to generate consistent corporate demand, while rising aspirations and improving connectivity are unlocking new leisure corridors. We are building a network that is not just larger, but stronger and more reliable for guests."

The announcement was made at a hotel partner summit in Hyderabad, outlining a 360-degree growth roadmap centred on supply expansion, improved quality standards and enhanced guest experience.

Sebi mulls relaxations in reporting requirements for stock brokers

Brokers who are banks or primary dealers will be required to report only those bank accounts that are used for stock broking activities

NEW DELHI: To boost ease of doing business, markets regulator Sebi on Friday proposed additional relaxations to reporting norms for stock brokers, including exempting certain demat accounts held by brokers who are also primary dealers from tagging requirements. Further, brokers that are banks or primary dealers will be required to report only those bank accounts that are used for stock broking activities, Sebi proposed.

"All demat accounts maintained by stock brokers should be appropriately tagged. Further, this shall not be applicable for the demat account which are used exclusively for activities other than stock broking activities by stock brokers, which are also primary dealers. "Stock broker which is also bank or primary dealer, shall be required to report to the stock exchanges only those bank accounts that are used for their stock broking activities," Sebi said in its draft circular.

Under the current rules,



brokers are required to maintain properly named and tagged bank and demat accounts and report the opening and closure of such accounts to stock exchanges. Certain exemptions were earlier provided to brokers that are banks.

In its draft circular inviting public comments on proposed relaxations, Sebi suggested that the earlier requirement regarding reporting of certain demat accounts by brokers has been deleted. Instead, depositories will share details of demat accounts opened or closed

by stock brokers directly with the concerned stock exchanges, as per a mechanism jointly decided by them.

Stock brokers should continue to ensure that all new bank and demat accounts are appropriately named as per the prescribed nomenclature. Details of newly opened bank accounts should be reported to stock exchanges within one week of opening, and closures must also be reported within one week.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comment till March 6 on the proposals.

Sudarshan Pharma stock slips 3% amid GST action

MUMBAI: Shares of Sudarshan Pharma Industries slipped over 3 per cent on Monday after the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department initiated an inspection and search operation at the company's registered office.

The stock fell 3.06 per cent on the BSE to hit an intraday low of Rs 25.62 per share. The shares were trading at the same level, down 3.06 per cent. Over the past one year, Sudarshan Pharma's stock has declined around 19 per cent, according to the official data.

The decline in the company's share price came after it informed exchanges that the GST department had initiated an inspection, search and seizure operation at its registered office on February 21, 2026. In its regulatory filing, the company said it is in the process of collating information and responding to the authorities.

It added that the final report related to the search and seizure will be concluded as per the prescribed procedures. Despite the recent development, the company had reported improved financial performance for the December quarter.



For Q3FY26, Sudarshan Pharma posted a net profit of Rs 4.15 crore, slightly higher than Rs 3.9 crore reported in the same quarter last year. Revenue from operations rose sharply to Rs 168 crore, compared to Rs 115.65 crore a year ago.

Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) stood at Rs 23.4 crore, up from Rs 16.6 crore in the year-ago period. However, the EBITDA margin declined to 22.8 per cent from 39.9 per cent year-on-year.

In its filing, the company said it is focusing on increasing exports and expanding manufacturing sales. It also highlighted efforts to improve profit margins from the resale of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) in domestic markets. According to the company, these initiatives helped it achieve substantial growth in profit after tax during FY25.

Bullion prices rise around 3%

NEW DELHI: Precious metal prices climbed 3 per cent in the national capital on Monday, with silver surging to Rs 2.7 lakh per kilogram and gold advancing to Rs 1.6 lakh per 10 grams, due to strong safe-haven demand amid growing global trade uncertainties after the US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs. According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver jumped Rs 8,000, or 3.03 per cent, to Rs 2,72,000 per kilogram from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,64,000 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also increased by Rs 3,300, or 2.06 per cent, to Rs 1,62,800 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

Silver and gold extended bullish momentum on Monday, with both metals trading at a three-week high, supported by renewed safe-haven demand. The rally came following a landmark US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs, which triggered sharp cross-asset volatility and prompted investors to seek safe-haven assets, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Mkts extend gains driven by improving global cues

Investors favoured domestic themes, with banks, power, FMCG, and consumer discretionary stocks gaining traction

Improved Sentiment

- BSE-Sensex rose 479.95pts or (+0.58%) to 83,294.66
- NSE-Nifty advanced 141.75pts or (+0.55%) to 25,713
- Fills offloaded Rs934.61-cr; DIs purchased Rs2,637.15-cr



MUMBAI: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Monday, tracking gains in PSU bank, auto and financial stocks, as investors' sentiments improved after the US Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

Extending its winning streak for a second consecutive session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 479.95 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 83,294.66. During the session, the benchmark jumped 671.44 points, or 0.81 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 83,486.15. A total of 2,435 stocks declined, while 1,894 advanced and 168 remained unchanged

on the BSE. The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 141.75 points, or 0.55 per cent, to close at 25,713. In the intraday session, it appreciated 200.2 points, or 0.78 per cent, to hit a high of 25,771.45.

"The US Supreme Court's ruling against Trump's reciprocal tariff policy was welcomed by domestic markets. Investors are awaiting more clarity on Trump's revised strategy and the scope of renegotiations with other nations. A weaker US dollar and declining 10-year Treasury yields may add near-term caution in the global market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Adani Ports was the biggest gainer from the Sensex pack, rising 2.98 per cent, followed by Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, PowerGrid, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers. On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Trent, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Eternal, Tata Steel, and IndiGo ended in losses.

"Sentiment improved largely in reaction to the US Supreme Court striking

down earlier import tariffs, temporarily easing trade-related concerns and boosting risk appetite across global markets. "Overall, the ongoing tussle in the index reflects prevailing uncertainty on the global front, while domestic cues remain largely muted," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The broader indices ended on a mixed note, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index gaining 0.41 per cent, while the Midcap Select Index declined 1.56 per cent.

"Sectorally, the IT index faced pressure from unresolved concerns over AI-driven disruption. Nonetheless, investors favoured domestic themes, with banks, power, FMCG, and consumer discretionary stocks gaining traction on expectations of resilient demand and economic recovery," Nair said.

Among the sectoral indices, PSU Bank increased the most by 1.4 per cent, followed by Services by 0.97 per cent, Hospitals by 0.89 per cent, Healthcare by 0.76 per cent, Power by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.71 per cent, Financial Services by 0.65 per cent, FMCG by 0.54 per cent, and Utilities by 0.52 per cent.

Small caps lead India Inc. earnings growth in Q3: Report

SMALL CAPS DELIVERED A ROBUST 22% YEAR-ON-YEAR EARNINGS, OUTPACING MID-CAPS AT 15% AND LARGE CAPS AT 14%

NEW DELHI: India Inc's earnings momentum remained resilient in Q3 FY26, with small-cap companies posting the strongest growth, a report said on Monday.

The report from Equirus Securities said small caps delivered a robust 22 per cent year-on-year earnings surge, outpacing mid-caps at 15 per cent and large caps at 14 per cent, signalling a broadening of the corporate earnings recovery. Revenue grew 10 per cent YoY, while EBITDA and PAT rose 14 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, ahead of market expectations, across companies under its coverage, the report said.

Around 36 per cent of companies saw earnings per share (EPS) upgrades, reflecting improving business fundamentals and demand resilience across multiple industries. The upgrades were led by auto, banks & NBFCs, consumer durables, FMCG, and IT, while downgrades were concentrated in building materials, cement, infrastructure, chemicals,



realty and retail, the report said. The trend indicates growing investor confidence and improving forward earnings visibility across market capitalisation segments, it added. Increasing number of firms from tier 2 and tier 3 towns have been tapping the capital markets, as founders look to grow and scale their businesses, said Ajay Garg, Managing Director, Equirus group.

"Looking into Q4FY26, key monitorable include the pace of NHA order awards for construction companies, the summer season demand cycle for consumer durables, US market dynamics and RBI rate decisions that

could influence BFSI NIM trajectories," said Maulik Patel, Director & Head of Research, Equirus Securities. Price hikes and demand momentum in cement offer near-term support, though new capacity additions may pressure utilisation rates, while logistics remains supported by EXIM recovery and Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) connectivity improvements, he added.

In the third quarter, financial services companies demonstrated steady asset quality trends and loan growth momentum, while consumption-linked sectors benefited from improving discretionary spending patterns.

Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters. The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them - **Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar**

Overconfident Indian players must shed ego: Gavaskar

◆ 'You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust.'

◆ Tilak Varma has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game'

AHMEDABAD

INDIA needed to take a cue from South Africa's innings, shed their ego and adapt to the conditions instead of walking out with overconfidence and throwing their bats at everything in their T20 World Cup clash, feels batting legend Sunil Gavaskar. South Africa snapped India's

12-match unbeaten streak at the T20 World Cup, handing the defending champions a heavy 76-run defeat.

"Having seen how Brevis and Miller built their partnership, that was the approach needed from the Indian batters," Gavaskar said on JioStar. "The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their

bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them."

"You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust." India lost their top three -- Ishan Kishan (0), Abhishek Sharma (15) and Tilak Varma



(1) -- inside the power play to slip to 26/3. "Tilak Varma

has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game. Ishan Kishan lost his wicket in the first over. The required rate was around 9.5 runs per over, not 15.

"So, Tilak could have given himself more time. At the other end, Abhishek Sharma had back-to-back ducks. So, the responsibility was on Tilak

to stick around, build a partnership, and get past the first six overs, but he failed to do that. "You don't always need to score 70 runs in the Powerplay. Even 55-60 runs would have been a good platform. But the reckless approach of the Indian batters led to their downfall in Ahmedabad." India next take on Zimbabwe and Gavaskar said he would

like to see Axar Patel return to the playing XI after missing the previous two games, with the team management opting for Washington Sundar. "I would look at bringing Axar Patel back into the playing XI, keeping in mind the lack of too many left-handed batters in Zimbabwe's line-up. You could possibly bring him in place of Arshdeep Singh.

At least one out of form batter to be dropped

◆ The team management might have to revisit the performances of Abhishek (15 runs in four games) and Tilak (107 runs in five games at strike rate of 118)

◆ Not to forget, the designated finisher Rinku Singh's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing to say the least



g's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing to say the least.

"If head coach and team management feels we need to do something different we will do things differently. Definitely a thought now comes if we have to change, what do we change and how do we change," batting coach Sitanshu Kotak didn't make bones about the fact that the team is indeed in a spot. "Now we have reached a point where we need to think if we need to do something different or stick with same combination," Kotak said.

Ten Doeschate was a bit more forthcoming when he admitted that it is indeed a "concern" that there are no back-up specialist batters in

the squad and Sanju Samson, despite his wretched form, might be back in the mix.

The logic could be bringing in a right hander to break the monotony. "You stick with the guys who you feel have performed really well over the last 18 months and maybe shy of a few runs now? Or do we twist and bring Sanju, who's also a fantastic player and obviously helps tactically with having a right hander at the top of the order," Ten Doeschate also echoed Kotak's sentiments but with more definitive answer that changes could be on cards. "I'm sure that (Samson's inclusion) will be a talking point over the next few days going into these two very important games (Zimbabwe and West Indies)."

Got to take him down: David on how they tackled Varun

KUSHAN SARKAR AHMEDABAD

ALL it needed was a still mind, limited movement and strong intent, said South African big-hitter David Miller as he opened up about how his team successfully nullified Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy in their T20 World Cup Super Eight clash here.



The in-form Chakravarthy was expected to be India's trump card but on a wicket that didn't offer much assistance, he went for 47 runs in his four overs with both Miller (63 off 35 balls) and Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) taking him to cleaners. "I think it's just about really making sure that we were on it in terms of if he bowls a bad ball we got to put it away - so a little bit more intent and it wasn't spinning too much tonight, so you can kind of trust the line," Miller said.

"And once we felt that, then we felt, OK, we've got to take him down, because he is a threat to every team that he does play against. So

Match starts 7pm IST



Spinners in focus as England, Pak eye crucial Super 8 points

PALLEKELE: On a surface expected to assist slow bowlers, both England and Pakistan will lean heavily on their spin resources in their Super Eights clash in the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday. England may not have hit top gear yet, but the two-time champions have found ways to win.

They kicked off their Super Eights campaign with a commanding 51-run victory over Sri Lanka, a result that significantly boosted their net run rate and took them to the top of the standings. Defending a modest total against Sri Lanka, England played according to the conditions perfectly.

Their spinners did the bulk of the work along with pacer Jofra Archer to trigger a dramatic Sri Lankan batting collapse. The ever-reliable leg spinner Adil Rashid and left arm spinner Liam Dawson have combined well to get the wickets. Meanwhile, Will Jacks has emerged as an unlikely match-winner. His off-spin has been handy, but it is his contributions with the bat, 39 against Nepal, 16 against Scotland and 53 versus Italy, that have repeatedly bailed England out of trouble. Opener Phil Salt returned to form with a match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, as he batted beyond the powerplay for the first time in the tournament. However, Jos Buttler's form remains a concern. But the veteran batter has got the backing of his captain Harry Brook, who himself is yet to find runs.

Ranji Trophy final begins today Star-studded K'taka hold all aces against gritty J&K

G UNNIKRIISHNAN HUBBALLI



JAMMU and Kashmir's entry into their maiden Ranji Trophy final is a heartwarming tale of grit and passion but to grab the title, the underdog side would need to pull off a giant-sized miracle against eight-time former champions Karnataka over the next five days, starting Tuesday.

The tag of favourites is attached to Karnataka not merely because of their rich legacy, but it is a well-earned one after a season in which they consistently rose above opponents, conditions and injuries to key players at various junctures. Karnataka have dominated teams both at home and away after a stuttering start against Saurashtra at Rajkot, where they conceded a narrow first innings lead to lose points.

However, eternal nemesis Mumbai and tricky newcomers Uttarakhand were dealt away with confidence and ease, indicating the growing belief within the side. Central to that dominance has been the form of their star batters - KL Rahul, Karun Nair, Devdutt Padik-

kal, and Ravichandran Smanan. Rahul (3 matches: 457 runs, Avg: 91.40), Karun (8 matches: 699 runs, Avg: 63.54), Devdutt (5 matches: 532 runs, Avg: 66.50), and Smanan (8 matches: 950 runs, Avg: 950) have fired on all cylinders through the season.

It has helped Karnataka overcome a middling season from Mayank Agarwal, who eventually stepped away from captaincy as Devdutt took over the team's reins. To his credit, the left-hander has led well both with the bat and his tactically sharp mind. This strong batting unit, however, will meet its match here at the KSCA Stadium in a capable Jammu and Kashmir bowling attack, led by pacer Aaquib Nabi. The team is at the biggest stage of India's domestic calendar for the first time since making its tournament debut 67 years ago.

Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas Sabka Prayas ?

Ex-BJP MP takes back blanket from Muslim woman after asking her religion

Congress condemned his action, saying religious discrimination is a violation of constitutional rights. Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse PM Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket

JAIPUR

FORMER BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria kicked up a row during a blanket distribution event at Rajasthan's

Tonk, when he allegedly took back a blanket given to a Muslim woman after asking her religion.

The Congress condemned his action, saying religious discrimination is a violation

of constitutional rights. Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse PM Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket.

According to locals, blankets were initially handed out to women present at the event, but it was later taken back from a Muslim woman.

He also said that the programme was his personal ini-



tiative and not linked to any government scheme.

Meanwhile, a Youth Congress leader went to the vil-

lage and distributed blankets to Muslim women, and accused the BJP of doing politics of division. Villagers, along with Congress workers, also held a protest on Monday. Leader of Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly, Tikaram Jolly, alleged discrimination and condemned the act.

"A former MP asking a poor woman her religion and then taking back the blanket is highly condemnable," Ju-

lly said. Congress MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur Harish Chandra Meena said that the treatment meted out to Muslim women by the former MP was the result of a "disruptive" mindset that destroys the social fabric of this country.

"Giving blankets to poor and helpless women, then asking their names and taking them back based on their religion, this is a deeply shameful and inhumane act,"

he said. "Politics is a medium of service, not of insult and discrimination. The public elects representatives so that they treat every class, every religion and every needy person equally, and not to mock anyone's poverty and helplessness," he added.

Meena asked whether the prime minister told the former MP that no one should help those who do not vote for Prime Minister Modi or his party.

Sisters died of poisoning ahead of wedding in Raj

According to the police, the two sisters worked at a private school and were believed to be unhappy with their alliances. Their bodies were found hours before the wedding processions were scheduled to arrive

JODHPUR

THE post-mortem report of two sisters who died at Manai village has confirmed poisoning as the cause of death, police said on Monday.

The victims, identified as Shobha (25) and Vimla (23), were set to be married on Saturday, and the preparations for their weddings were in full swing on Thursday night, when the incident occurred.

According to the police, the two sisters worked at a private school and were believed to be unhappy with their alliances. Their bodies were found hours before the wedding processions were scheduled to arrive.

Soorsagar Police Station House Officer (SHO) Harishchandra Solanki said that the medical board confirmed the death due to poisoning. No poisonous substance was recovered from the scene. "Viscera samples have been preserved and sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory to identify the



exact substance consumed," Solanki said, adding that there is also suspicion of a drug overdose. As part of the investigation, the police have seized the mobile phones of both sisters to examine chats, call records and social media activity.

Police also questioned their father, Deep Singh, to ascertain if the deaths were a case of suicide or involving other factors such as family disputes or external pressure. The sisters were earlier engaged to members of a family in Bhinmal through their maternal uncle.

Fake medicine factory unearthed in Bihar

Massive haul of spurious drugs

NEW DELHI

DELHI Police has unearthed a factory involved in manufacturing and repackaging spurious medicines and psychotropic substances near Patna, an official said on Monday. The action was taken during investigation of an FIR registered under the NDPS Act at the Crime Branch police station, he said. Po-

lice said the breakthrough came days after two similar illegal pharmaceutical units were exposed in Bihar.

Acting on information gathered from previous arrests and the interrogation of an accused identified as Arun, a team of the Crime Branch zeroed in on another suspect, Brijesh, who was allegedly running an illegal manufacturing and repackaging unit, a senior police officer said. The officer said Arun was earlier found coordinating the illegal manufacture and distribution of opioids

and operating a clandestine medicines unit. Based on his disclosure, the team with the local drug department raided the unit.

"It was found to be operating without a valid manufacturing licence and in the absence of mandatory technical staff, including manufacturing and analytical chemists. Legal proceedings have been initiated as per due process," he added. The team has seized a massive haul of spurious tablets, syrups, machinery and packaging material from the premises.



Probe launched into toddler's death

Kerala family alleges medical negligence

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

POLICE have launched a probe after a two-and-a-half-year-old child died and her family alleged medical negligence against a private hospital in Kattakada here, officials said on Monday. The deceased has been identified as Aisha Fathima, daughter of Sidique and Fasilath of Punal, Perumkulam here.

According to police, on February 18, the child developed physical discomfort, including breathing issues and swelling near her eyebrow. She was first taken to the government hospital in Aryanad. The next day, after similar symptoms recurred, her parents took her to a private hospital in Kattakada, where, after medication, her condition improved, and she returned home, police said.

On February 20, the parents took her to an ophthalmology centre as the swelling near her eyebrow persisted. Police officials said that on Sunday, however, the symptoms re-emerged and the child was again taken



to the private hospital in Kattakada. After being given nebulisation and injections, she was referred to another private hospital, officials said.

However, upon reaching the hospital, she was declared dead after preliminary treatment, police said. The family has alleged medical negligence against the private hospital and filed a complaint at Aryanad police station on Sunday. Police officials said a case of unnatural death has been registered, and the cause of death will be ascertained after the post-mortem examination scheduled for Monday.

The father of the deceased claimed on Monday that his daughter's condition worsened after injections were administered at the private hospital in Kattakada.



Army rescues 46 tourists stuck in snowy Sikkim

SIKKIM: Indian Army troops have rescued 46 tourists stranded due to heavy snowfall in high-altitude areas of Sikkim's East district, a defence statement said on Monday. Several tourist vehicles got stuck along vulnerable road stretches in East Sikkim district on Sunday during sudden and intense snowfall in sub-zero temperatures, exposing tourists and locals to harsh climatic conditions, it said.

On learning about the situation, Army troops moved promptly to the affected areas and initiated rescue and relief measures, the statement said. "A total of 46 tourists were safely rescued and shifted to the nearest Army camp, where they were medically examined and provided with warm shelter, hot meals, heating arrangements and essential relief materials to mitigate the effects of extreme cold and altitude-related stress," it said.



JEE Main 2026 session 1: Toppers share preparation mantras

HIGHLIGHT HOW DISCIPLINED ROUTINES, MOCK-TEST ANALYSIS, AND STEADY FOCUS SHAPED THEIR PERFORMANCE

ARTI ADKE

The National Testing Agency (NTA) recently announced the results of JEE Main 2026 Session 1, with several candidates securing above the 99 percentile, underscoring the intense competition for admission to premier engineering institutions across the country. Among the high achievers, Shreyas Pai secured 99.23 percentile, Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi scored 99.87 percentile, and Sughosh Joshi achieved 99.776 percentile. The results mark a significant milestone for thousands of aspirants who appeared for the first session of one of India's most competitive entrance examinations.

Structured preparation key to success

For Shreyas Pai (99.23 percentile), disciplined daily study routines played a decisive role. Balancing college hours from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., he dedicated four to five hours each day to focused preparation. His strategy revolved around practising module questions and extensively solving Previous Year Questions (PYQs).

"I followed a question-wise analysis after every mock test," Shreyas said. He maintained an "error book" where he documented mistakes and revised incorrect answers to avoid repeating them. Addressing his biggest weakness — exam nervousness — he relied on repeated practice to build confidence. On exam day, his mantra was simple: remain calm and focus solely on attempting questions without worrying about the outcome.

To prevent burnout, Shreyas divided his workload into manageable daily targets, ensuring he did not leave large portions



Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi

for the last moment. He focused on rigorous practice during the initial months, reserving the final phase for revision and repetition. Leisure time, including playing cricket with friends, helped him maintain balance.

Learning from mistakes

Bharath Madhusudhan Gudi (99.87 percentile) attributed his success to consistency and discipline in his daily study plan. "I ensured that no backlog spilled over to the next day," he said. Conceptual clarity came from attentive classroom learning and thorough revision of notes, but he emphasised that practice was indispensable. Weekly tests served as checkpoints to track progress.



Shreyas Pai

Bharath described his error book as a powerful self-reflection tool. "Realising your mistakes gives the greatest confidence," he said, adding that poor performances in some tests did not deter him emotionally but instead became learning opportunities.

He identified agitation, overthinking, and exam-day anxiety as personal weaknesses. With conscious effort, guidance from parents and teachers, and cultivating contentment with his preparation, he overcame these challenges.

On the day of the exam, Bharath ensured sufficient sleep and mental relaxation. He followed a structured CPM order — allocating 45 minutes to Chemistry, one hour to Physics, and the remaining time



Sughosh Joshi

to Mathematics. Prioritising accuracy over speed, he maintained composure even when faced with difficult questions.

To manage stress, he maintained a balanced routine combining reading and problem-solving. Time spent with friends and supportive teachers further eased the pressure.

Discipline and patience pay off

Sughosh Joshi (99.776 percentile) followed a rigorous schedule stretching from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. In the initial phase, classroom sessions focused on building conceptual foundations, followed by self-study to bridge gaps and gradually increase the level of problem difficulty. In the final month, intensive mock tests boosted his

confidence.

Sughosh analysed every mock test on the same day, using an error log to identify weak areas. This systematic revision helped him avoid repeating mistakes in the final examination.

He acknowledged speed and patience as early weaknesses. Timed practice improved his speed, while tackling challenging, multi-directional questions strengthened his persistence and conceptual depth.

With his exam scheduled in the afternoon session, Sughosh consciously avoided last-minute revision on the day of the test. Treating the examination like any other mock test helped reduce anxiety. "Being in the present and focusing on the current question was crucial," he noted.

Stress management, he emphasised, was a continuous process supported by parents, teachers, healthy peer competition, sufficient sleep, and daily relaxation time.

Gateway to premier institutes

JEE Main serves as the qualifying examination for admission to National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), and other centrally funded technical institutions, besides acting as a gateway to JEE Advanced.

With Session 1 results now declared, aspirants are gearing up for Session 2, determined to improve their scores and secure seats in leading engineering institutions. The journeys of these 99-percentilers underscore that structured preparation, self-analysis, and emotional resilience remain the cornerstones of success in one of India's toughest academic challenges.

Employer survey signals rise in skills-focused fresher hiring

Hiring sentiment for entry-level talent has strengthened for the first half of 2026, with 73 per cent of employers indicating plans to recruit freshers, according to the latest Career Outlook Report HY1 2026 released by TeamLease EdTech. The figure marks a three-percentage-point increase over the previous half-year, pointing to renewed employer confidence alongside a sharper focus on applied skills.

The report is based on responses from 1,051 employers surveyed across India between November 2025 and January 2026. It highlights sustained demand for early-career professionals while underscoring a gradual shift from degree-based screening to skills-driven hiring practices.

Retail, start-ups and manufacturing lead demand

Sector-wise, Retail recorded the highest hiring intent at 91 per cent, followed by E-commerce and Technology Start-ups at 90 per cent, and Manufacturing at 85 per cent. Retail employers are seeking roles such as dark store assistants and inventory management assistants. Start-ups are recruiting digital sales associates and junior web developers, while manufacturing firms are hiring inventory and logistics coordinators and battery assembly technicians.

The survey also points to a sharp surge



in select sectors compared to the same period last year. Retail hiring intent rose from 41 per cent in HY1 2025 to 91 per cent in HY1 2026, a 50-percentage-point increase. Travel recorded a 51-point rise to 77 per cent, while Power and Energy climbed 50 points to 72 per cent, indicating recovery momentum and expanding opportunities for young professionals.

Applied skills gain priority

Commenting on the findings, Shantanu Roop, Founder and CEO of TeamLease EdTech, described the trend as a "structural reset" in how early-career talent integrates into the workforce. He noted that while opportunities are in-

creasing, hiring is becoming more selective. The report identifies a widening gap between candidates who possess demonstrable skills and those who rely solely on academic qualifications. Employers are increasingly favouring applicants with internships, live projects and work portfolios. Freshers able to showcase hands-on experience are moving more quickly into career tracks, while degree-only candidates face longer job search cycles. Overall, the survey suggests that although the hiring landscape is expanding, success for first-time job seekers will depend significantly on their ability to demonstrate practical, job-ready competencies in a competitive market.

How to stay calm and focused during exam

Examinations can be stressful, often bringing anxiety and self-doubt even for students who have prepared thoroughly. However, success in an exam depends not only on knowledge but also on the ability to remain calm and focused under pressure. Managing emotions inside the examination hall plays a crucial role in clear thinking and effective time use. With simple strategies such as controlled breathing, structured planning, and positive self-talk, students can improve concentration and perform at their best.

Practise controlled breathing

One of the simplest and most effective techniques is controlled breathing. Before the question paper is distributed, take slow, deep breaths—inhalation for four seconds, hold for four seconds, and exhale for four seconds. Repeating this process for a minute helps slow the heart rate and relax the mind, reducing immediate stress. If anxiety returns during the exam, pause briefly, place both feet firmly on the floor, and repeat the breathing cycle. Even a short reset can restore concentration.

Start with familiar questions

Confidence also plays a major role in maintaining calmness. Instead of worrying about difficult questions, remind yourself that you have prepared consistently and are capable of solving the paper step by step. Begin by answering questions you find familiar or easier. Early success builds momentum and boosts confidence, making it easier to approach more challenging sections later. Avoid comparing your progress with others in the hall; each student works at a different pace.

Plan your time wisely

Another important strategy is staying mentally organised. Spend the first few minutes reading the entire paper carefully and planning how much time to allocate to each section. A clear plan reduces panic and ensures that no question is left unanswered due to poor time distribution. If you encounter a question you cannot solve immediately, mark it and move forward instead of losing valuable minutes worrying about it.

Use positive self-talk

Positive self-talk is equally helpful. Replace thoughts such as "I may forget every-



thing" with "I will attempt each question calmly." This small shift in mindset improves emotional stability and prevents unnecessary stress. Keeping your posture relaxed, stretching your fingers occasionally, and sipping water when allowed can also help maintain physical comfort and focus.

Finally, remember that an examination is only one step

in a longer academic journey. Viewing it as an opportunity to demonstrate learning rather than a moment of fear helps reduce pressure. By practising breathing techniques, planning answers wisely, and maintaining steady confidence, students can remain calm, focused, and perform to the best of their abilities during the examination.

Youth innovation takes the lead, turning ideas into action

10th edition of SolveCon 2026 sees 1,700 youth changemakers collaborate, build, and commit to real-world solutions

The 10th edition of SolveCon '26 brought youth innovation to the forefront, with nearly 1,700 young changemakers gathering at PES University, Bengaluru, to collaborate on practical solutions to real-world challenges. Hosted by Reap Benefit, the event also saw participation from representatives of 88 organisations spanning civic engagement, education, climate action, mental wellbeing, and the arts.

Throughout the day-long event, participants worked in teams to map local climate risks, design mental health awareness campaigns, debate public policy issues, and initiate cross-city



collaborations. The format encouraged hands-on problem-solving and peer learning rather than passive participation.

Organisations such as Giving Tuesday India, Science Gallery Bengaluru, TinkerHub, Teach For India, Azim Premji Uni-



versity, NIMHANS and SELCO Foundation were among those that engaged with participants. The event was supported by

partners including Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, Rainmatter Foundation, NetApp and the MacArthur Foundation. The

gathering featured interactive sessions with leaders from diverse fields. Among them were Kailash Nadh, Chief Technology Officer at Zerodha and board member at Rainmatter Foundation; Priyanka Francis, IAS, Director of the National Gallery of Modern Art; Ashwini Hiremath, Founder of Wild Wild Women; and Deepak Dhananjaya, Founder of the Prabhava Institute of Inclusive Mental Health. Instead of traditional keynote speeches, speakers engaged in open dialogue with students. Kailash Nadh highlighted the importance of human skills in a technology-driven world, noting that curiosity, clarity of thought, and articulation re-

main essential even as artificial intelligence tools become widely accessible.

Kuldeep Dantewadia, Co-founder and CEO of Reap Benefit, said the national edition reflects a broader shift in youth engagement. He emphasised that the platform enables young people to question, experiment, and translate ideas into action when given the space and trust to do so.

Organisers observed strong interest in continuing engagement through follow-up programmes, indicating that the event functioned not merely as a one-day gathering but as a catalyst for sustained, youth-led innovation and collaboration.



'Aura of Ustaad' song launch turns into a grand celebration of PSPK's legacy



The launch of the song "Aura of Ustaad" from the upcoming film Ustaad Bhagat Singh turned into a spectacular celebration of star power, music, and fandom, as the team behind the project unveiled what many are already calling a defining anthem for fans of Pawan Kalyan. The powerful hook line — "Nenu Meda Muttukunte, Toda Kottinatte" — has instantly gone viral, symbolizing the actor's iconic screen presence and unmatched mass appeal.

Director Harish Shankar described the song as more than a tribute, calling it a musical festival crafted from deep understanding rather than admiration. He revealed that the line was inspired by Pawan Kalyan's signature body language, a mannerism he has carried for over two decades. The lyrics were penned by Chandrabose, who completed the song in a single day, giving the track both literary depth and emotional power.

Music composer Devi Sri Prasad added that the song is a timeless tribute to Pawan Kalyan's personality, values, and aura. He credited the director's vision and the lyricist's writing for shaping a composition that feels both celebratory and iconic, stating that the track represents the true "Aura of Pawan Kalyan."

Chandrabose described the song as an expression of "Pawanism," reflecting the actor's principles, journey, and influence across generations. The event concluded on an emotional and festive note, with the team expressing confidence that the song and the film will strike a deep chord with audiences. Ustaad Bhagat Singh is being produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y. Ravi Shankar under Mythri Movie Makers and is scheduled for a grand theatrical release on March 26.

'Aaya Sher' promo from 'The Paradise' sets the internet ablaze

Ahead of Natural Star Nani's birthday celebrations tomorrow, excitement among fans has reached a fever pitch with the release of the promo for the first single "Aaya Sher" from his much-anticipated pan-world film 'The Paradise'. As promised by the makers, the full song will be unveiled on his birthday, making it a special gift for fans across the globe. The fiery promo features Rockstar Anirudh Ravichander delivering a high-octane, adrenaline-charged composition driven by thunderous beats and a powerful, roaring chorus. Visually, the promo plunges viewers into a gritty, intense world filled with sweat, smoke, chaos, and raw energy, perfectly capturing the massive scale and mood of the film.



Nani's transformation has emerged as the biggest talking point. Sporting a striking red jacket, blazing eyes, and an intimidating rugged look, the actor appears in a fierce, commanding avatar that has instantly electrified fans. Standing amid frenzied crowds, he embodies the image of a lion reclaiming his throne, with the promo's final

moments delivering a strong dose of mass elevation and cinematic high.

Director Srikanth Odela has been widely praised for his larger-than-life vision and the powerful way he translates it onto the screen. Choreographer Sudhan Master also hints at a full-scale mass spectacle, suggesting that the complete song will be a swagger-filled visual carnival.

Backed by producer Sudhakar Cherukuri's SLV Cinemas, 'The Paradise' is shaping up as a global-scale cinematic event. The film is scheduled for a grand worldwide theatrical release on August 21, further heightening anticipation for what promises to be one of Nani's most ambitious projects yet.

Wedding of VIROSH: Rashmika and Vijay Deverakonda make it official



Ending months of speculation and fan curiosity, star couple Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda have officially announced their wedding, putting an end to the long-running suspense around their relationship. The couple took to Instagram to share the happy news, confirming that they are entering wedlock and beautifully christening their union as the "Wedding of VIROSH" — a name lovingly given to them by fans.

Sharing a heartfelt message, both actors posted the same story on Instagram, expressing gratitude to their supporters for naming their bond long before they did. In their emotional note, they wrote that even before they made plans for themselves, fans had already given them the identity of "VIROSH," and they were now honouring that love by officially naming their wedding after it. The announcement instantly went viral, with fans and celebrities flooding social

media with congratulatory messages. Wedding festivities have already begun and are being kept strictly private. The families have reportedly departed for Udaipur, where the ceremonies are scheduled to take place. According to sources, the haldi ceremony will be held on February 24, followed by the sangeet on February 25, and the wedding on February 26. The venue is said to be a secluded hill resort on the outskirts of the city, most likely The Mementos by ITC Hotels, ensuring privacy and exclusivity for the intimate celebrations. While the wedding itself will be a private affair, the couple is planning a grand reception for the film fraternity and distinguished guests. The lavish reception is scheduled for March 4 from 7 PM onwards at Taj Krishna, where several prominent personalities from the film and political circles are expected to attend, making it one of the most anticipated celebrity events of the year.



Alia Bhatt shines at BAFTA 2026 Awards, debuts as presenter in London

Bollywood star Alia Bhatt made a stunning international statement by attending the BAFTA Awards 2026 ceremony in London, where she marked her debut as a presenter. Her appearance quickly became one of the most talked-about moments of the prestigious event, drawing attention from fans, fashion critics, and

global media alike.

For the red carpet, Alia chose a custom silver sequinned gown by Gucci, which reflected a soft, elegant shimmer under the lights. The outfit featured a subtle glow that enhanced her presence without being overpowering. She paired the gown with a light wrap to stay warm in the London weather and opted for minimal styling, keeping her hair neatly done and her makeup soft and refined. The understated elegance of her look was widely praised for its sophistication and international appeal.

Social media was abuzz soon after her appearance, with fans applauding her classy fashion choices and confident

presence on such a major global platform. Many admired how she avoided heavy jewellery and excessive styling, allowing the gown and her natural grace to take center stage. Her red-carpet look was hailed as a perfect blend of glamour and simplicity.

On the professional front, Alia Bhatt continues to stay busy with major film commitments. She is currently working on her upcoming projects Alpha and Love & War, keeping fans excited about what lies ahead. Balancing global appearances with big-ticket film projects, Alia continues to strengthen her position as one of India's most influential and globally recognised stars.

Saiyami Kher embraces vulnerability in Vikram Phadnis' upcoming social drama

Actress Saiyami Kher is set to surprise audiences with a softer and more emotionally driven performance in filmmaker Vikram Phadnis' upcoming yet-untitled social drama, where she will be seen exploring a more vulnerable side of her acting journey. The film, which also stars Tahir Raj Bhasin, marks a shift from the physically demanding roles she has been known for in recent years. Speaking about the project, Saiyami shared that the film attracted her because of its emotional depth and internal storytelling.

She described the role as "softer and more emotional," adding that it focuses more on inner journeys rather than external action. According to the actress, portraying vulnerability can often be more challenging than action-heavy performances, and that challenge motivated her to take on the project. On the work front, Saiyami recently wrapped up shooting for Haiwaan, directed by Priyadarshan and starring Akshay Kumar and Saif Ali Khan. The film, also featuring Sharib Hashmi, marks the reunion of Akshay and Saif after 18 years and was shot across Kochi, Ooty, and Mumbai. She was last seen in Jaat, directed by Gopichand Malineni, alongside Sunny Deol and Randeep Hooda. From her Telugu debut Rey to Hindi projects like Mirzya, Ghoomer, and series such as Special OPS, Saiyami continues to evolve with diverse and challenging roles across cinema and streaming platforms.



'Killer' teaser gets a grand launch

The teaser of the upcoming Telugu film Killer was officially launched at a grand event in Hyderabad, generating strong buzz among film circles and audiences. Starring Jyoti Poorvaj and Poorvaj in the lead roles, the film also features Manish Gilada, Chandrakant Kollu, Vishal Raj, Archana Ananth, and Gautham Chakradhar Koppishetty in key roles. The project is produced by Poorvaj and Padmanabha Reddy A under the banners Think Cinema and AU & I Studios, with the blessings of Dhyanam Nannagar and presented by Urvish Poorvaj. Directed by Poorvaj, the film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon.



Speaking at the event, line producer Sitarama Rao said the entire team worked tirelessly on the project and expressed confidence that audiences would extend the same love to the film as they did to the teaser. Line producer Dasarath Madhav described Killer as a content-driven film blending emotional brother-sister

sentiment with strong storytelling, adding that despite being a small film, it has the potential for big success.

Actors Manish Gilada, Gautham Chakradhar, Vishal Raj and others praised the film's technical quality and Jyoti Poorvaj's surprising transformation and action performance. Jyoti Poor-

vaj revealed that the film marks her shift from routine television roles, calling it a dream opportunity where she plays multiple characters and performs intense action sequences inspired by iconic women-centric roles like those of Vijayashanti.

Director Poorvaj stated that the script was conceived years ago and blends artificial intelligence, emotional drama, revenge, subconscious identity, and brother-sister bonding into a multi-layered sci-fi thriller. He added that the teaser reveals only part of the story, with much more to be unveiled in the upcoming trailer. The teaser launch was supported by director Anil Ravipudi, marking a confident start for the ambitious project.